

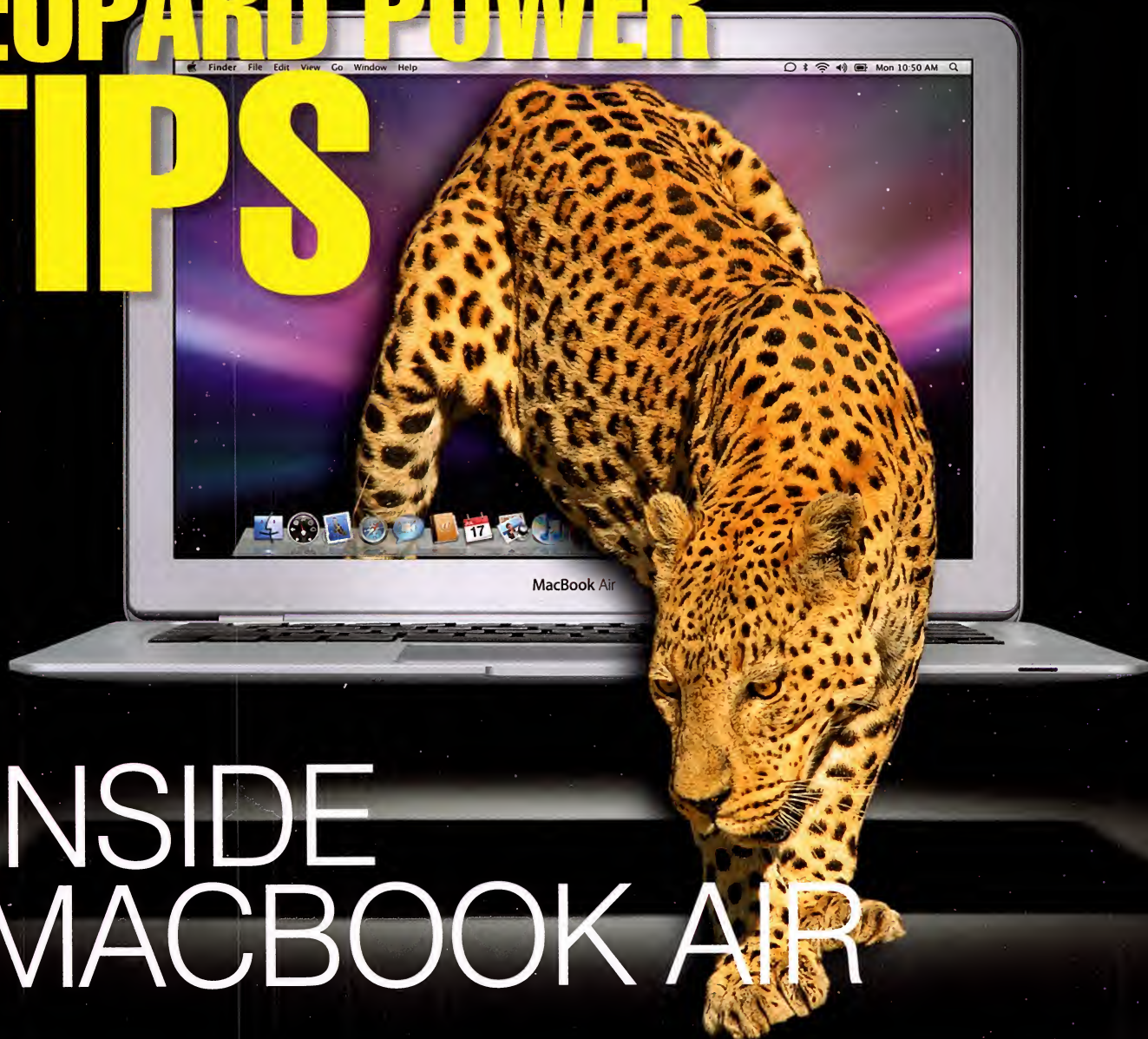
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Leopard grows from a kitten to a cat with the latest update, which fixes not only bugs but a number of user complaints. Shock — Apple actually listens!

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Second impressions of the MacBook Air

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Barrie Smith

Apple's iPhoto book printing service has finally arrived in Australia, but it isn't the only way to get your photos turned into a book. Nor is it necessarily the best or the cheapest. We look at some of the other options.

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042 See the light

Various authors

The MacBook Air is not like any other computer you've ever seen. It's not a full-featured desktop replacement notebook, but nor is it a sub-notebook. It's thinner and lighter, but somehow bigger — an unusual beast indeed. We answer some of the questions you might still have.





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Potent power

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Swiss Army knife of GPS

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Matthew JC. Powell has a deep and abiding passion for the Mac, the magazine and its readers — in no particular order.

Apple grows a set of ears

HAVE you ever noticed how, the very day you finally decide to get around to taking that non-functioning appliance down to the electrical store to get it looked at, it springs to life? Or how the weird knocking sound your car makes on the road mysteriously vanishes within hearing distance of any licensed mechanic?

They call it "the malice of the inanimate object". Sometimes it applies to companies as well.

Take, for instance, just as a random example, Apple. For almost six years now I've been cajoling Apple Australia (and Apple US for that matter) to bring the iPhoto printing services to Australia. I've written articles about how to bypass the geographical restrictions at enormous cost. I've editorialised, I'm sure, beyond many people's pain thresholds. Still, it didn't happen.

Add to that, of course, the massive volume of letters, e-mails, phone calls and other forms of communication that Apple has received over the past few years from its customers desperate for the service to come here.

Then we decided "hang it, we'll write a feature about the other services that are available locally. Apple can chew on that". Who cares if Apple never brings the service out here — we'll get by.

Naturally Apple launched the service mere days before that feature was due to hit the presses. Naturally we had to rewrite great swathes of the thing rapidly, with nary a moment to spare.

Timing annoyances aside, it's a massive relief that the service is finally

here. Finally Australian Mac users have access to the full feature set of iPhoto. Given we've never got a discount on the retail price of iLife for the reduced feature set, that's a major problem defused.

Of course, it's not the only problem. We still lack worthwhile video content on iTunes. Yes, the software is free, but we're paying full price for video-capable iPods with no legal way to get a movie onto them.

Apple has responded to that one as well, by hiring Kevin Swint, formerly of US retailer Wal-Mart, to expand iTunes video distribution internationally. Don't expect us to be very high on the list (we were 21st in line for the Store in the first place) but at least there's a list. One of these days we'll be able to pay for really little compressed copies of movies and TV shows. Ahhh, that's progress.

In the meantime, there are still a few ways to get video content from the US Store over here, even though Apple has closed off most of the loopholes (the old "get a US Paypal account" trick that so many were using is no longer available for instance).

I've just rented 3:10 to Yuma, to see what I think of the service. Frankly, not all that impressed. Maybe I should have picked a different movie — I got halfway through this one, then didn't get back to it and it erased itself. That's annoying, and not the sort of behaviour one would expect from a DVD.

Perhaps by the time the iTunes Rental service hits Australia Apple will have listened some more and come up with less draconian DRM for it. Rule 1: let the customer watch the movie at least once. Innovative.

Then there's the OS X 10.5.2 update. Or, as I call it, OS X 10.5.let's-just-pretend-the-last-few-months-didn't-happen). Here is a grand example of Apple hearing its customers' cries and actually acting upon them.

It's not unprecedented. I recall at the 1997 Worldwide Developers' Conference Apple announced that even though "Rhapsody" (as the new OS was then known) would be Unix-based, the Unix bits would be hidden. The crowd grumbled audibly. A couple of days later Apple announced that the Unix would be hidden, but accessible if you want it. Meet the Terminal.

Then there was the Apple menu. In the OS X Public Beta, there was no Apple menu. There was an Apple logo centred on the menu bar, but it did nothing. Everyone with a voice (and a copy of the Beta) cried out in anguish, and their cries were heard in Cupertino, and the Apple menu returned. Over in the corner, not centred on the menu, no less. It's still there now.

Apple has a long history of hearing its customers' complaints and suggestions and responding with a distinct air of "we know what you want better than you do". Sometimes that's borne out (no floppy drive in the iMac) but mostly it's a pain in the ears.

The fixes to 10.5 indicate a new humility from Apple — a willingness to accept that sometimes the customer actually is right. That can only be a good thing. ☞

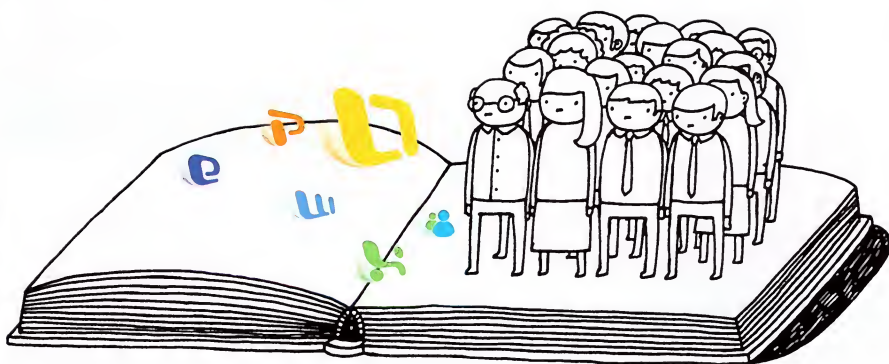
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⌘-V

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Each month, Conexus (02 9975 0900) gives away a set of JBL Creature II speakers valued at \$200 to the *Australian Macworld* reader who sends in what we deem to be the most interesting letter. JBL's Creature II three-piece speaker system produces high-quality stereo sound for movies, MP3's and gaming experiences. Featuring a cutting-edge sci-fi design and superior sound performance, JBL Creature II is a unique "plug-and-play" solution, compatible with all Mac® and PC desktops and portables as well as MP3 players and Walkman® units. JBL Creature II offers consumers cool design and exceptional sound

Letters should be e-mailed to matthew.powell@niche.com.au with a subject header of "Command – V" or by post to *Australian Macworld* Mailbox, 170 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205. Letters of fewer than 200 words are given preference. Comments posted to the forums on www.macworld.com.au are also eligible for the Creature II prize.. We reserve the right to edit letters and probably will. To be eligible for the JBL Creature II prize, you must include your full name and address, including state or territory.

JBL Creature II letter of the month

UPGRADE TESTS

I was interested to see an advertisement in your January issue promoting processor upgrades for G4 Power Mac machines that promise several magnitudes of speed improvement plus the potential to run software that would otherwise be incompatible with these machines.

I maintain two G4 Power Macs at my small business workplace: a G4/667MHz "Digital Audio" model running Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger Server as our network file/mail/database server; and a G4/800 MHz "Quicksilver 2002" model running Adobe CS3 for our print production. While stable performers they are starting to show their age a little, and an upgrade for each to a dual G4/1.6 GHz processor or thereabouts for only \$1000 altogether obviously sounds more palatable for the budget.

Would Australian Macworld consider a report testing how well these processor upgrades perform? It would be helpful to see the results of independent tests rather than manufacturer claims.

More generally, would Australian Macworld consider a regular "older Mac" feature about hardware, software and reader stories relating to non-cutting edge Macs that I know many of your readers and writers alike still use? I understand we all like to dream about (and occasionally even purchase!) the latest-and-greatest, but I for one feel one of the best aspects of the platform is its longevity.

Damon Schultz
Adelaide, SA

We've often considered the possibility of upgrade tests, Damon, but the problem of course is that upgrades are going to perform differently on different machines depending on the original spec. And it would be difficult to test multiple upgrades on a single test machine because they often involve irreversible changes to the original machine.

We look at upgrades from time to time, but all such reviews can only be taken in isolation and not seen as comparative.

More coverage of older Macs is indeed something quite a few readers have been asking for. Now that we have an online

presence and the unlimited space that entails, expect to see that kind of coverage real soon now. — M.JC.P.

WESTIES UNITE!

I'm fascinated that there's no Perth Mac user group. Even Geraldton — 20,000 people and 4-5 hours to our north — has a user group, but not Perth. Not that I could make it to such a thing, but just find it interesting.

Any other Perthites out there?

Xenophos
via Forums

There must be some Mac users in Perth. Hop onto our forums and join in Xenophos's thread — maybe we can get a user group up and running. — M.JC.P.

LESS IS MORE

It is always interesting trying to second guess a minimalist. I suppose you just say nothing ... and wait!

The design team at Apple still continues to impress. Just by eliminating the unnecessary parts sooner or later they get down in size and simplicity. Take for example the iPod shuffle, just eight hours of music, a go, stop and pause button in a box about the size of a postage stamp. How absolutely amazing! The iMac was another brilliant example of less is more: just the screen, and a keyboard. No box at all! Brilliant in its utter simplicity.

I remember the first Mac, the little useless beige box, all in one, somewhat humble and simple. It had a definite charm and personality. Methinks the Apple folks are finally getting back to their roots, and this new little slip of a notebook (MacBook Air) is yet another in a long and brilliant line of simple intuitive design for complex folks. Well done!!

Now if the software folks could just follow suit...

"Older and Wiser"
via Forums

TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Mentor letter of the month 1. Instructions on how to enter form part of these conditions of entry. 2. To enter send tips or queries to matthew.powell@niche.com.au with a subject header of "Command – V". Entries will be judged by the editorial staff of *Australian Macworld*. The judges' decision in relation to any aspect of the competition is final and binding on every person who enters. No correspondence will be entered into. Chance plays no part in determining the winner(s). Each entry will be individually judged based on its degree of interest. 4. Employees, their immediate families and agencies associated with this competition are not permitted to enter. 5. The Promoter accepts no responsibility for late or misdirected entries. 6. The best entry/entries as determined by the judges will win the prize(s). 7. The Promoter is neither responsible nor liable for any change in the value of the prize occurring between the publish date and the date the prize(s) is claimed. 8. The prize(s) is not transferable and will not be exchanged for cash. 9. The winner(s) will be notified by mail. 10. All entries become the property of the Promoter. 11. The collection, use and disclosure of personal information provided in connection with this competition is governed by the Privacy Notice 12. The Promoter is Niche Media Pty Ltd of 170 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205 Ph 03 9948 4900, (ABN 13 064 613 529).



SPEAK TO ME

The last brick in the wall Apple needed to close off the road to the future for the Windows PC was a first-class speech recognition programme. Until now, there's been nothing for the Mac approaching the ease and accuracy of Naturally Speaking, the Windows-compatible program produced by Nuance Communications and now in its 9th version.

Speech programs must meet two key criteria: they must be able to recognise words and transcribe them accurately, and they must be able to obey commands (switch to capitals from lower case and insert punctuation marks, etc). But Dictate can also obey commands outside the dictation page, such as "Open iTunes" or in Entourage, "send". A third capability, met by Dragon Naturally Speaking, to "read back" the text as typed, is at the moment beyond the ability of Dictate. Nor, it seems can it correct errors by voice command — you have to make the correction by mouse and keyboard. This was Version 1.0, but improvements are likely soon, which will make it the equal of DNS. My recommendation is to wait for the updated version, at least until we hear that updates with these important additions will be free.

Geoffrey Luck
Mittagong

I had a look at Dictate at the Expo, and I was impressed. I've been in touch with the local distributor, MacSense, and we'll have a full locally-generated review as soon as it's shipping here (of course a US review won't indicate how well it works with an Australian accent, will it). — M.J.C.P.

BENTO LOGIC

I have been using the Bento pre-release beta preview since November. And a cracking good little product it is. Much nicer and easier to use and much prettier. Now comes "Buy-time" and what do I find?

My American (or Canadian) friend can download their copy for \$US49 (\$A54) and I am being required to pay \$A72 + GST (\$US64.50) for exactly the same thing. What an absolute rip-off!

I would very happily pay the same as my American counterpart but I am buggered if I will be made a fool of by FileMaker Inc. It is time that FileMaker (and maybe its parent company) got up to speed with the global village.

Every other software company that I do business with has one price for the software that you download no matter where in the world you are located. In the twenty-first century how can it be any other way?

Bernie Green
Gisborne, Victoria

In Canada and the US our Bento software can be purchased online via download. Unfortunately electronic download is not currently available for our software in Australia. We're working on it.

In this case the comparison is between electronic download of software v shipping physical boxes — very different costs are involved.

The estimated retail price of physical box software varies between Australia and the US for some very real reasons, not the least of which includes Australia being remote and comparatively sparsely populated with manufacture occurring offshore and resulting import charges, plus government charges and taxes.

FileMaker is planning to introduce electronic software distribution (ESD) for Australia. ESD will remove the additional landed costs associated with offshore manufacture, customs charges, shipping and handling. In the meantime we are offering free shipping and handling for on-line purchases of our boxed software from our Australian web store. — Steve McManus, Managing Director, FileMaker Australasia

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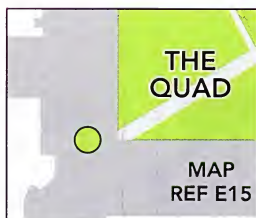
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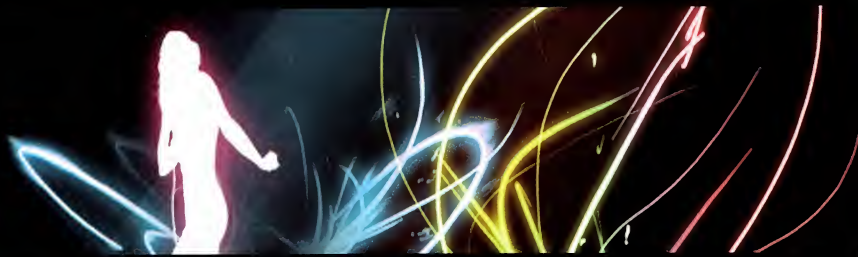
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10.5.2 shows Apple listens

OVER the years, Apple periodically comes under fire for not listening to its customers – specifically, for deciding on particular features (or a lack thereof) and then sticking by its guns regardless of the reaction. Although some of this criticism is off-base, some of it is spot-on.

But the release of the Mac OS X 10.5.2 Update in mid-February shows that sometimes Apple does listen, and occasionally even reverses design decisions because of user feedback. There are substantial changes in this release, which is why it's 180MB for 10.5.1 users or a whopping 343MB for the combo updater from 10.5.0 – in a lot of ways, it's a complete rethinking of Leopard.

Consider some of the tweaks.

Hierarchical stacks. Perhaps the most controversial changes in Leopard involve the new Dock. In addition to a much-maligned 3D appearance, the debut of Stacks in Leopard meant the removal of a popular existing feature: hierarchical Dock menus. In Panther and Tiger, you could place a folder in the Dock and then navigate that folder's contents right there in the folder's own hierarchical menu.

A couple weeks after Leopard debuted, I evaluated Stacks, covering both its benefits and its (many) flaws. I offered a few suggestions for how Apple could "fix" Stacks:

"If you Control/right-click on a folder in the Dock, you currently get the option to force the stack to display as a grid or a fan; the single biggest complaint about Stacks could be remedied if an option were added for forcing the stack to display in a Tiger-like hierarchical menu ... Another simple improvement would be to let the user

choose – via a similar setting in a stack's options menu – a stack's Dock icon: the actual folder icon, a generic icon, or the current 'determined-on-the-fly' icon."

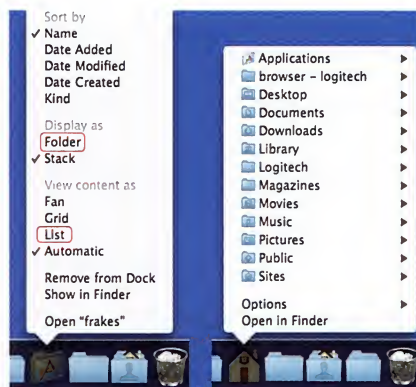
There were other suggestions, as well, but these were the big ones. As I noted at the time, implementing these changes wouldn't affect Stacks' behaviour for those who like it the way it is, but would improve it – dramatically – for those who were fans of the older Dock behaviour.

So imagine my surprise when I installed 10.5.2 and found those options available in the options menu for each stack. (You can access this menu by Control-clicking or right-clicking on the stack's Dock icon.)

The List View option lets you view that stack as a hierarchical menu of the folder's contents. The Folder Display option changes the stack's icon to that of the actual folder. In addition to being less confusing, the latter option also lets you use custom folder icons to differentiate folders in the Dock.

Even better, compared to Tiger's Dock, the new List (hierarchical) view retains the Leopard-introduced ability to

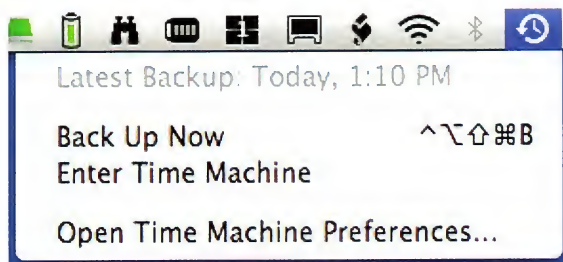
[APPLE NEWS]



Tiger stacks. Mac OS X 10.5.2's new Stacks display options (left), and a stack viewed in List – a.k.a., hierarchical – mode (right)

Do it now.

I've assigned a keyboard shortcut to Back Up Now; I use this if I'm about to unplug my external drive from my laptop and I want to be sure I've backed up my latest work beforehand.



sort the list by name, date added, date modified, date created, or kind – meaning stacks is now more functional and useful than Tiger's Dock menus.

Unfortunately you can't set your default preferences for these settings so that all new stacks automatically exhibit your preferred behaviour; you'll have to change the settings for each stack separately. Still, well done, Apple.

Non-transparent menu bar. Another controversial interface element in the initial release of Leopard was its menu bar. Unlike the solid-white menu bar found in every previous version of the Mac OS, Leopard's stock menu bar is semi-transparent, and your Desktop extends behind it – which means that the menu bar's colour, texture, and readability depend on your choice of Desktop picture.

In 10.5.2 you can get rid of menu-bar transparency with a simple setting in System Preferences; specifically, the Translucent Menu Bar checkbox in the Desktop & Screen Saver preference pane. However, note that with this option disabled, you don't actually get the old, bright-white menu bar back; instead, you get a subtle grey version. Personally, I think I just may like this grey bar better – it doesn't stand out quite as much as a white bar, but it still makes menus and menu-bar icons easy to read.

Apple also tweaked the standard menu bar slightly, so that even if you don't take advantage of the new non-translucent option, menus will be slightly-less transparent, improving visibility. All of these are simple but effective changes.

Time Machine menu-bar indicator. Finally, another set of minor interface complaints have focused on Leopard's Time Machine backup feature. In the initial release of Leopard, there was no obvious way to tell when a backup was occurring. If you had a Finder window open, with the sidebar visible and your backup drive displayed in the sidebar, an easy-to-miss bit of animation would appear next to that drive during a backup. Or you

could keep the Time Machine pane of System Preferences open; during a backup, the "Next Backup" text would change to "Backing up" and display a progress meter. (You also had to visit the preference pane to see when your last backup occurred.)

Similarly, if you wanted to start a backup manually, you had to keep Time Machine in the Dock or open a Finder window with the sidebar visible, as the Back Up Now command was available only in the contextual menu for those items.

In OS X 10.5.2, Apple has added a new Time Machine menu-bar icon that plays on the "turn back time" theme – the icon looks like a clock with a counter-clockwise, circular arrow around it. Click on this icon to reveal the date and time of the last Time Machine backup. You'll also find commands to start a backup manually, to enter Time Machine (in order to recover files), and to visit the Time Machine preference pane in System Preferences. And because this is a standard Mac OS X menu extra, you can use Keyboard & Mouse preferences to set up keyboard shortcuts for any of these commands.

If you use multiple Time Machine drives, you might think you still need to keep Time Machine in the Dock in order to access the Browse Other Time Machine Disks feature. But the new menu includes this command, as well, even if accessing it isn't obvious: hold down the Option key and Enter Time Machine changes to Browse Other Time Machine Disks.

There's even some cute-but-useful animation: when Time Machine is executing a backup, the little clock's hands, and the circular arrow, turn backwards.

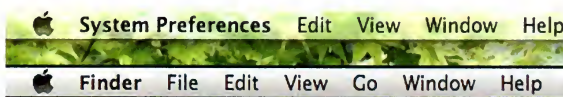
This new menu provides the most important information users want to know about their backups, as well as quick access to the most-frequently-used Time Machine commands. It saves trips to System Preferences, and it lets users free up some Dock space by removing Time Machine from the Dock.

Keep it up. Now, there are times the addition of particular features is attributed to public outcry, when the reality may simply be that the features weren't ready when the product was initially released. But in two of the examples I've covered here, the "new" behaviour is simply an option to revert to behaviour that's been around for years. And the third example just makes already-available information and commands easier to access. So I think it's safe to say that, in this case, the voices of users spurred Apple to make these changes.

Which means that we should give Apple credit for listening – and acting. It also means users should continue to voice their concerns. Because sometimes it does make a difference. — Dan Frakes

Menu selection.

Leopard's original menu bar (top) and the new non-transparent version in 10.5.2 (bottom)



Apple releases Aperture 2

JUST before Valentine's day, Apple introduced Aperture 2, a major upgrade to its workflow and lossless image editing software for professional photographers. Aperture 2 is now priced at \$268. Owners of Aperture 1 can upgrade for \$129.

Aperture 2 adds more than 100 features, a streamlined user interface and a new image processing engine, according to Apple. New imaging tools have been added, to help photographers recover highlights, bring out colour vibrancy, manage local contrast definition, do soft-edged retouching and vignetting, and fine-tune RAW images.

"The theme of this release is performance, simplicity and imaging," said Kirk Paulsen, Apple's senior director, application Product Marketing.

Aperture 2 lets users post their image portfolios on .Mac web galleries, or to the iPhone, iPod touch and Apple TV. Users can switch between the Viewer and Browser modes using a single key command; an all-in-one heads up display lets users toggle between library, metadata and adjustment controls using a single tabbed inspector.

There's a new All Projects view that's been modelled after iPhoto's Events view. It provides a "poster" photo for every project and the ability to skim through the photos inside quickly. An integrated iPhoto browser helps you access directly any images and events you have stored in iPhoto.

Speed boost. "Without question, our users wanted us to focus on performance," said Paulsen. "Speed is absolutely paramount [to Aperture users]."

Apple has made changes to Aperture 2 to make it faster to import, browse and search large volumes of images. Images can be exported in the background, and users can caption, keyword and rate images as they're being imported. You can also browse RAW images in rapid succession without having to wait for files to load using Quick Preview. This will come in particularly handy for users who are downloading RAW images from digital cameras, according to Joe Schorr, Apple's senior product manager, photo applications.

"Most camera RAW files have an embedded JPEG preview within them," said Schorr. "Quick Preview looks for those, so you instantly get a preview. Now when you just quickly need to scan through images, check focus and see what you've got, you have a way to do it without loading the RAW file."

The Aperture library database has also been overhauled to provide fast project switching and "near instantaneous" search results, even when you're working with large libraries of hundreds of thousands of images.

"Everything that involves the database – scrolling, switching between projects, searches – gets very quick response," said Schorr. "It makes the entire application feel much more responsive, and Aperture now scales more elegantly for large libraries."

Easier for hobbyists. While Aperture was originally designed for professional photographers, Paulsen said that another group taken the software under its wing – hobbyist photographers.

"Fifty-four percent of regular iPhoto users self-identify as hobbyists, not just point-and-click camera users," said Paulsen. "They invest in digital SLRs and lenses. So we solicited feedback from them, and we discovered that they wanted to make use of Aperture, but they wanted us to make it more accessible and intuitive."

To that end, Apple has made user interfaces changes like consolidating the Projects, Metadata and Adjustments panes into a single inspector and Heads Up Display (HUD). Users can customise keyboard commands (and can export and import keyboard maps they've created). The software gets simplified hiding behaviour for the Filmstrip in Full Screen mode, a new All Projects view that lets users "skim" contents as they skim "Events" in iPhoto '08, and the ability to switch through different panes using a single key command and cycle through different views by pressing the V key. Metadata is now easier to enter; there's a new Viewer Online mode, and more.

RAW pipeline gets reworked. Apple's release of Mac OS X v10.5.2, combined with Aperture 2, provides support for new digital camera file RAW formats, including Nikon's D3 and D300. DSLR users haven't been pleased with Apple's slow update of RAW support for these and other new cameras. Schorr said it was necessary in order to rework Mac OS X and Aperture's RAW decoding scheme completely.

"We replumbed the RAW pipeline for this release, and what we're delivering in terms of quality is worth it," said Schorr. "We've made huge strides in colour rendering, in noise reduction in shadows, in detail, in high-light recovery. We've added some incredibly powerful



[SOFTWARE]

new features like Vibrancy, a new Definition filter, and a real retouch brush with soft edges, complete with control over opacity and feathering."

RAW decoding support ultimately remains at the operating system level, which means that Apple has to update core operating system components to add support for new cameras, but Schorr said the key changes made in Mac OS X v10.5.2 and Aperture 2 will allow Apple to be more flexible going forward.

The new Recovery tool is used for pulling back "blown" highlights, while Vibrancy boosts saturation selectively without messing up skin tones. Definition lets you add clarity to images using local contrast. Vignette and Devignette filters are new, as well.

A new feature for studio photographers has been added: support for tethered shooting. This lets photographers connect a supported camera through USB

or FireWire and shoot directly into Aperture, saving them from having to transfer files from a flash media card, enabling them to proof work on a Mac as they're shooting.

Tethered shooting in Aperture works using a standard called Picture Transport Protocol (PTP), and as such, it requires supported cameras. Schorr said that many Nikon and Canon models sport the capability. "Tethered shooting even works with the iPhone," said Schorr.

Apple has also added new book printing capabilities in Aperture. The software includes new theme designs, layout tools, support for customised dust jackets (including full-bleed) and foil-stamped covers.

According to Apple Australia's spokesperson, Aperture 2 also enables the book-printing services to be used in Australia, just as the recent iPhoto update allowed users of that program to order books in this country. As with the iPhoto books, the Aperture books are printed in the USA, so all of the same features available to American users are enabled for Australians.

Carried over from iPhoto '08 is the ability to publish Aperture projects directly to a .Mac Web Gallery. And with Aperture 2's support of .Mac Web Galleries, you can upload optimized JPEG, full-sized JPEG or original RAW images.

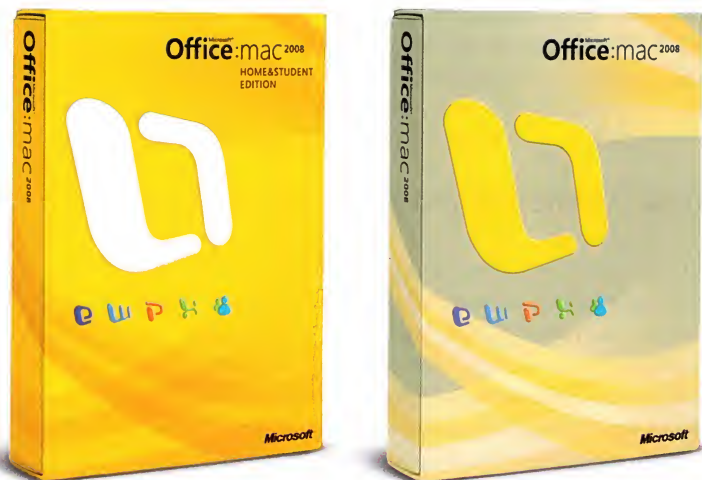
"We've taken it a step further than iPhoto," said Schorr. "Now Aperture users can actually use .Mac as a distribution mechanism." — Peter Cohen



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[RUMOUR MILL]

MacBook Pro update imminent?

WE'RE generally hesitant to report on rumours in these pages, as speculation and prognostication more often than not turn out to be inaccurate, and we hate inaccuracy.

However, one rumour that seems to be heading towards a roar rather than a rumble is the notion that an update to the MacBook Pro will be released some time between the day this issue goes to print and the day it hits the newsstands. If that turns out to be true we'd look awfully silly having an issue on the streets that didn't mention the new machines.

So, take all that follows with a grain of salt.

The revised MacBook Pro is set to include the same multi-touch trackpad that Apple has put in the MacBook Air. Larger and more capable than the current MacBook and MacBook Pro trackpads, it's driven by the same multi-touch controller behind the screens of the iPod touch and iPhone. Additional supported gestures include zooming in and out of the screen with a "pinch" motion and paging back and forwards in Safari with a three-fingered "swipe".

At the heart of the hypothetical new MacBook Pro are Intel's Penryn processors, unveiled at the end of last year. While for the most part similar to the Merom processors currently included in MacBook Pros, the Penryns use a 45-nanometre fabrication process as opposed to the current 65-nanometre process. This allows greater cooling and opens the potential for considerably faster clock speeds.

The first-generation Penryns operate at much the same speeds as Meroms, but according to Intel they provide up to 20 percent greater performance cycle for cycle. There is a 2.8GHz Core 2 Duo Extreme chip in the Penryn line, but Apple has so far eschewed the very fastest Intel chips in favour of more cost-effective designs.

The new MacBook Pro was originally rumoured to be released at the Macworld Expo in January, but it is believed Apple delayed that release in order to give the MacBook Air a more central role. In addition to the MacBook Air's trackpad, the revised MacBook Pro is said to adopt the ultralight's wedge-shaped form factor.

Naturally and unsurprisingly, Apple has no comment on scuttlebutt. Believe the rumours or not, as you choose. — Matthew JC. Powell



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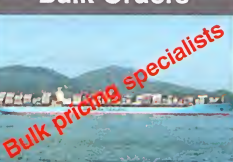
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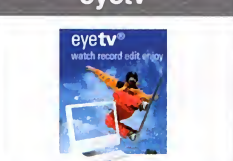
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 VectorDesigner

Best of show

THE Macworld Conference and Expo is an astonishing place to find new and innovative products. This year, these 11 products stood out from the rest of a very large, very full field. — Dan Miller

BusySync, from BusyMac. BusySync lets you share iCal calendars on a local network or over the internet without a dedicated server. You can select the calendars you want to share, specify read and write privileges, and assign passwords. The new version also lets you sync iCal with Google Calendar (\$US20 to \$US25 per computer).

Dictate, from MacSpeech. Dictate is built from the ground up for Intel Macs, yet uses the same acclaimed recognition engine as Dragon Naturally Speaking. The software will transcribe your words in word processors, spreadsheets, e-mail, chats — pretty much any program you use (Distributed by MacSense, pricing not known at press time).

Eye-Fi Card, from Eye-Fi. At first you may think it's just another 2GB SD card. But the Eye-Fi Card also uploads your digital photos from your camera to your Mac wirelessly — no plugging or unplugging required, and no card reader necessary. Install the Eye-Fi Manager software on your Mac, and the program can route your pictures automatically to iPhoto or to your favourite photo-sharing site (\$US100; No Australian distributor at press time).

Flow, from Gridiron Software. Flow is a tool for organizing and tracking the relationships between your digital assets. It knows which files are used in which documents, which fonts are used in each file, and what will happen to your projects if you delete a particular file from your system. And its Visual Versioning feature lets you restore older versions of a file (Pricing not announced).

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock, from Aspyr Media. In the Guitar Hero franchise, you live out your rock-star fantasies as you "play" guitar or bass along with your favorite rock songs. The better you play, the more money you earn to buy new gear, new stage outfits,



and new songs. Guitar Hero III doesn't radically alter the basic premise, but the music this time around ranges from classic rock like Heart to the Sex Pistols, Smashing Pumpkins, and beyond (\$160 from Try and Byte, 02 9906 5227).

MacBook Air, from Apple. The MacBook Air is almost frighteningly skinny. And yet it really is a full-fledged Mac, even if it makes you give up a few things. See the feature on page 042 for more information (\$2499).

MultiSync LCD3090WQXi, from NEC. What sets this 30-inch monitor apart is a faster pixel response time, higher contrast ratio, and wider viewing angle than those of the 30-inch Apple Cinema HD Display. It also has built-in tools that automatically adjust backlighting and individual pixels to ensure colour uniformity across the screen and over time (Pricing unavailable at press time).

OmniFocus, from The Omni Group. OmniFocus makes it easy to capture new to-do items anytime one occurs to you. It also integrates nicely with OS X: it'll sync with iCal, you can add tasks via e-mail, and you can search your to-do list with Spotlight (\$US80; Available online).

Parallels Server, from SWsoft. Install Parallels Server on an Intel-based machine running OS X (client or server), and you can then run Windows, Linux, and Novell server operating systems on the same machine at the same time. It'll even let you run OS X Server as a virtual machine on OS X Client. You can now run almost any server OS from a Mac — something you can't do today on a Windows machine (pricing not announced).

Photoshop Elements 6.0, from Adobe. Adobe's consumer-level photo editor is quicker to launch, sports a dramatically revised interface, and is finally a Universal program. (Pricing unavailable at press time).

VectorDesigner, from TweakerSoft. Based on OS X's Core Image technology, VectorDesigner has an integrated Flickr browser that lets you search for images by colour or tags, fairly complete vector controls (including tools for turning rasters into vectors), and some interesting effects (\$US70; Available online).



Hotlinks

www.macworld.com.au/events
More information about user group activities

User group activities for March 2008

Compiled by Nicholas Pyers

Sat 1

AUSOM [VIC]

www.ausom.net.au

Mon 3:

Gold Coast Macintosh User Group [QLD]

www.goldcoastmacusers.org.au

Sydney Apple Macintosh Users Groups (AMUG) [NSW]

homepage.mac.com/sydamug

Tue 4

AMUG Sydney [NSW]

homepage.mac.com/sydamug/

MacTalk — Newcastle & The Hunter Macintosh User Group [NSW]

groups.yahoo.com/group/MacTalk

Wed 5

Club Mac [NSW]

www.clubmac.org.au

Toowoomba Apple & Mac UG (TAAMUG) [QLD]

www.taamug.org.au

North Queensland Macintosh Users Group [QLD]

www.nqmug.org

Thu 6

TasMac [TAS]

groups.yahoo.com/group/tasmug

Sat 8

Sydney Apple Macintosh Users Groups (AMUG) [NSW]

homepage.mac.com/sydamug

South Australian Apple Users' Club [SA]

www.saauc.org.au

Sun 9

Gold Coast Apple Users Group [QLD]

go.in.to/gcusers

Mon 10

Macintosh Users Group Sunshine Coast (MUGSUNCO) [QLD]

www.mugsunco.org.au

Tue 11

ACT Apple Users Group [ACT]

www.actapple.org.au

Macintosh Multimedia Group [3MG] [VIC]

www.ausom.net.au/multimedia.html

www.imug.com.au

Wed 12

Club Mac [NSW]

www.clubmac.org.au

Coffs Harbour Mac User Group [NSW]
groups.yahoo.com/group/coffs_mac_users

AUSOM Retiree & Others [VIC]
www.ausom.net.au/retirees.html

South Australian Apple Users' Club [SA]
www.saauc.org.au

Bellarine Mac User Group (BMUG) [VIC]
www.bellarinemac.org.au

Sun 16

Apple-Q [QLD]
www.apple-q.org.au

Mon 17

Byron Shire Macintosh Users Group (BSMUG) [NSW]

www.ozshop.net/bsmug

Tue 25

ACT Apple Users Group [ACT]
www.actapple.org.au

iMug (Internet Macintosh User Group Inc) [VIC]

imug.com.au

Thu 27

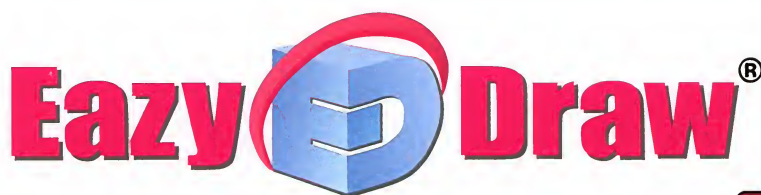
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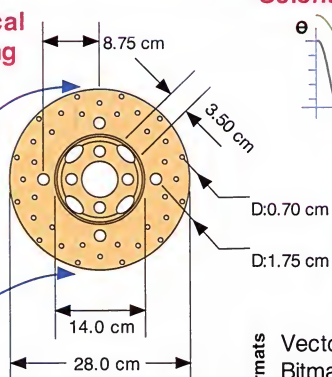
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DXF
AppleWorks

Sketch

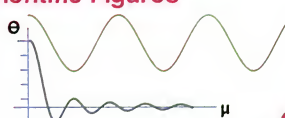


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iGom:Belkin TuneStudio and Podcast Studio

AFTER so many years of iPod accessories aimed at individual or small group music listening, it's great to see new releases targeted at people wanting to use their iPods to make music. Belkin is one of the premiere iPod accessory manufacturers and it's leading the way with two new products.

The TuneStudio is a stunning unit that is a four-channel mixer that turns your iPod into a recording device. With four audio inputs and lots of outboard features it's certainly an all-in-one unit. Each channel has a three-band EQ, pan and level controls and the XLR inputs are phantom-power enabled – an essential for so many microphones. It records to your iPod in 16-bit, 44.1kHz and

a stereo compressor is built in to prevent audio levels exceeding what your iPod can take. TuneStudio is compatible with the iPod classic, 2nd and 3rd generation Nano and 5th generation iPod video and will be available in the next month or two, contact Belkin Australia on (02) 4350 4600. Australian pricing hasn't been confirmed at press time – it retails for \$US400 in the US.

Also being released in coming months (think June) is the Belkin Podcast Studio which is an even more compact iPod recording dock with built in microphone, XLR input and speaker retailing around the \$US100 mark. We'll be sure to have a closer look at both when they hit Australia. — David Holloway

[BRIEFS]

Hotlinks

www.hipgizmos.com
More than iPod stuff now
www.seagate.com
Hard-drive manufacturer
www.databasics.com.au
Distributor of SeeFile4
72.72.82.165/seeFile/
Online demo of SeeFile4

Seagate: Solid-state drives will stay pricey

With the launch of the MacBook Air and, specifically, the option to add a solid-state drive for an additional \$1408, customers have been speculating about when the price of such drives might come down into the realm of the reasonable.

At a recent Seagate briefing in Sydney, some cold water was thrown on those hopes. According to Woody Monroy, Seagate's VP of Corporate Communications, "SSD notebooks are viewed as a niche market for the foreseeable future. Hard drives are projected to be the mainstream choice for notebook and desktop computers. Hybrid hard drives, combining HDD with solid-state memory could take a fair share of the market, followed by SSD. Seagate plans to provide all three technology combinations to our customers, so that they can offer consumers whatever storage solution meets their needs."

In shorthand: they'll get cheaper, but not a lot cheaper, and not soon. — M.J.C.P.

Hip Gizmos moves into HD

Hip Gizmos, best known for its range of iPod accessories and gadgets, has expanded its product portfolio into high-end audio-visual with an agreement to distribute Konnet products in Australia. Konnet is a highly-regarded Canadian manufacturer of AV cabling, and Hip Gizmos says it will be the exclusive supplier of Konnet cables in this Australia and New Zealand. For further information contact Hip Gizmos on 03 9551 8760. — M.J.C.P.

Databasics to carry SeeFile

Databasics, best known as the distributor of Canto Cumulus digital asset management software in Australia, has signed an agreement to carry SeeFile4, a new style of asset-management system that requires no client software, throughout Australia, New Zealand and South-East Asia. Unlike workflow solutions like Cumulus, SeeFile4 allows users to display media assets as thumbnails over a network and share lightboxes through an innovative browser interface. SeeFile4 was announced at the Macworld Conference and Expo in January. SeeFile4 should complement other asset-management and workflow solutions in Databasics' stable. An online demo of how it works is available (see "Hotlinks"). — M.J.C.P.



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Get More

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- Dennis Sellers (Macsimum News)

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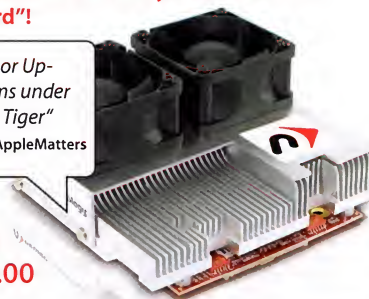
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Björn Again: the next best thing to ABBA

YOU may have seen Björn Again perform at some stage – they’ve been playing since 1988 and are the sort of band that perform regularly and attract a significant following. And they’re openly endorsed by Benny and Björn of ABBA so they must be pretty good. AMW caught up with Björn Again’s manager John Tyrrell and Ashley Reeder, who has the role of “Benny” and is the band’s musical programmer.

When did Björn Again start their relationship with Macs?

John Tyrrell: My very first computer was a Classic way back in 1989, on the advice of a friend who had heard that “if you were going to get a computer then you should get a Mac”. I’m so glad I took his advice.

I used the Classic to help with the admin side as manager of Björn Again – letters, faxes, databases, spreadsheets, song lists, mailouts, reports, accounts etc. We didn’t use Macs for the music and video side of things until much later. Today we simply couldn’t function without our Macs and the great software we use almost every day in the office and on the road.

Nearly all the BA management band and crew have Macs, are huge Mac lovers and swear by them.

In regards to music production, how do you utilise Macs?

Ashley Reeder: Every aspect of our show tracks is produced on my iMac in my home studio. Our six band members all play and sing live in every song on stage, but the complex nature of re-creating the music of ABBA necessitates using supplementary backing tracks. I use the latest version of Logic Pro 7 to produce the extra keyboard, strings and percussion parts. We also use

Logic to track any extra guitar and background vocal parts that can’t be covered on stage. I use all of the software instruments that come with Logic plus instruments from Toontrack, Garritan, Sampletekk, Quantum Leap, Steinberg and Native Instruments.

JT: One anecdote – in 2001, Björn Again performed in Los Angeles at

a key Microsoft product launch with Bill Gates present. We just thought it weird performing “Money, Money, Money” in front of Bill Gates, with all the music programming and equipment done on Macs.

What’s your favourite application to make music?

AR: No question, Logic Pro. I’ve been a Logic user since version 2 on the PC. When Apple/Emagic discontinued support for the Windows platform, I figured it would be easier to switch to using a Mac than to learn a new production program. It was the easiest and best decision I ever could have made. I think it’s safe to say I’ve become a Mac nutter.

So you use Macs pretty heavily in your live show?

AR: We run the show using Logic Express on a G4 PowerBook. It’s so stable and reliable. I premix all of the midi and audio content to bounced audio files of the various instruments, then we send it all as multi-track information to front of house and monitors via a MOTU 828 mk11 FireWire interface. The MOTU also sends MIDI program change commands to Jamie’s (“Björn”) guitar pod. This allows him to run all over the stage, plus all of his guitar sounds change automatically. This is a great way that technology can be a show enhancing tool. It took a lot of work and experimenting to figure it all out, but it was definitely worth it. I also use my own PowerBook to run software instruments that I play live.

Where do you see music technology evolving in coming years?

AR: I think the convergence of hardware and software products is more likely, plus the continued development of distributed processing amongst two or more computers or other hardware devices to cope with the huge amount of processing grunt that a lot of software is demanding. The ability to dynamically change and alter audio in real time will probably become more user-friendly and easier. Having said that, the bottom line is that the technology should always serve the musicality of what it is connected to. It’s pointless having the latest and greatest gadgets and programs if you don’t have a great song to begin with!

JT: I imagine that audio, video and internet technological advances will allow Björn Again to present live concerts in new and exciting ways, especially in what we do given we’re a copy act and a parody act. Who knows what’s in store! — *David Holloway*



Blackmagicdesign



New Intensity Pro introduces HDMI with analog editing in HD and SD for \$525



Intensity Pro is the only capture and playback card for Final Cut Studio 2™ with HDMI and analog connections. Intensity Pro allows you to upgrade to Hollywood production quality using large screen edit monitoring and high quality uncompressed or Apple ProRes 422 video.

Beyond the Limits of HDV

HDV's heavy compression and limited 1440 x 1080 resolution can cause problems with quality and editing. Intensity Pro eliminates these problems and lets you choose from uncompressed video, Apple ProRes 422 and more, all at full 1920 x 1080 HDTV resolution. Now you can capture in 1080i HD, 720p HD or NTSC/PAL video.



Cinema Style Edit Monitoring

Use Intensity Pro's HDMI or analog output for incredible big screen video monitoring. Unlike FireWire™ based solutions, Intensity uses an uncompressed video connection direct to Final Cut Pro's real time effects renderer. No FireWire™ compression means all CPU processing is dedicated to more effects and video layers!

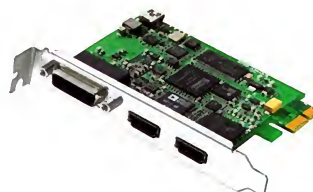


Connect to Anything!

Intensity Pro includes HDMI and component analog, NTSC/PAL and S-video connections in a low cost plug-in card. Capture from HDMI cameras, VHS and Video8 decks, gaming consoles, set-top boxes and more. Playback to large screen televisions and video projectors.

Use your Favorite Software

Intensity Pro is fully integrated with Mac OS X™ and Apple Final Cut Pro™, Motion™, Color™, DVD Studio Pro™, Adobe After Effects™, Adobe Photoshop™, Autodesk Combustion™ and other QuickTime™ based video editing and compositing software.



Intensity Pro
\$525

Learn more today at www.blackmagic-design.com

Australian Macworld Disc of the Month

BACK in the mid-1980s, the killer application that made the Macintosh — with its tiny nine-inch 512x342 pixel black & white screen — into a successful platform was Aldus PageMaker, which in turn spawned the entire Desktop Publishing industry.

A lot has happened in the last twenty years. Screens have grown to 30-inches or more and they support millions of colours. What hasn't changed is the fact that you can still turn your Mac in to an all-round publishing house. We have gathered together a selection of some very inexpensive, or even free, software, so you can generate your own greeting cards, envelopes and labels, flyers and newsletters, calendars and scrapbooks, banners, signs and posters CD and DVD labels, covers and inserts.

The files are available for individual download via our mates at Ausmac, or you can get the programs on a disc from participating user groups.

Business Card Composer allows you to design and print professional looking business cards.

Disc Cover creates attractive covers for your CDs and DVDs as well as case inserts.

Swift Publisher is for laying out newsletters, flyers and brochures.

Mail Factory is the tool for you if you're sick of hand-writing envelopes, and it's suitable for printing a single envelope or mailing merging thousands.

Art Text LE and **Image Tricks** — two assistant applications for creating stunning effects with fonts and for editing and generating graphics — are also included.

iScrapbook enables you to design and print beautiful photograph scrapbooks and albums.

SOHO Business Cards ensure great first impressions.

SOHO Labels is the fastest way to design and print professional looking labels on your Macintosh.

SOHO Signs is the one to turn to if you need to great giant banners or signs.

Desktop Calendar Pro creates bright and attractive Yearly, Monthly, Weekly, and Daily calendars

Desktop Publisher Pro is a high quality, full featured desktop publishing tool for the professional and novice alike

Labels and Cards Pro provides you with a complete label, barcode and mailing list capability from home or the office.

PDF Studio allows users to review and annotate PDF documents, scan-to-pdf, fill PDF forms, change security, highlight text and more.

Addressix is an envelope printing utility designed to make printing mailing envelopes quick and easy. Even unusual envelope sizes like greeting cards.

Avery Mac Label Expert is the best application for use with any Avery Label product, US and A4 sizes, and your Mac to create fantastic-looking labels, cards, CD/DVD labels and much more.

Book Smart was one of the best ways of creating and ordering photo books before Apple provided intergrated support for iPhoto Books for Australians (and it still is)

Calendar Maker makes custom calendars for your newsletter, your web site, your school, your church, your club, your team, your refrigerator ... your anything.

Cocoa Booklet lets you create a booklet out of a PDF file, a process known as pages imposition.

Create Booklet does precisely what the name suggests. A booklet is a staple of pages that is folded in the middle to be used like a book. This means the pages have to be resorted before printing and two pages have to be shrunk onto one. Create Booklet is a PDF Service you can do it directly from the print panel.

Discus 4 creates labels and covers for not CDs and DVDs but also for jewel cases, Mini-DV, DVC-Pro and more.

DrawWell is a powerful document creation tool with excellent graphics capabilities and many novel and useful features.

Easy Card makes it easy to surprise someone close to you with a personally-created greeting card.

Easy Envelopes a widget for printing envelopes simply and quickly.

Imprint puts you just four simple steps away from smart, professional, printed labels or envelopes.

iRemember turns your photos in to lasting memories, ready to print or e-mail.

My Calendar 2008 lets you create custom calendars any size your printer can print.

PDF Shrink is ideal for consumers and small businesses that need to produce PDFs at a quality and file size appropriate for use on the web, as e-mail attachments, CD-ROMs and for on-screen reading.

Poster Print is the ultimate solution for creating huge prints. Holiday photography, panorama picture or banner? It doesn't matter!

Snail Mail is a simple yet powerful envelope printer.

— Nicholas Pyers



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NEC SpectraView Cash Back Promotion...

Purchase either a 20" or 26" NEC certified SpectraView monitor, with calibration kit, from Vital Peripherals during February or March 2008 and you will receive a cash back from NEC.

Enjoy unparalleled display performance in your colour critical applications with the NEC SpectraView Series LCD displays. These ultra-thin frame monitors feature the SpectraView Colour Calibration Solution, which combines sophisticated colour profiling software with a light shielding hood. The result is a highly accurate, reliable, repeatable and feature-rich display calibration and profiling solution. These displays are available in both 20-inch and 26-inch screen sizes.

For full details visit: www.macworld.com.au/necspectra
or call 131 632 from anywhere in Australia.



Be an AMW reviewer

Australian Macworld is offering one reader the opportunity to win a MacBook Air portable computer and review it as a guest on the Weekend Edition podcast. All you have to do is prove you can review a computer.

Ever since its launch at the Macworld Conference and Expo in January, the MacBook Air has courted controversy. Some love it, some hate it, and some simply wonder who in the world it's for. The problem is, most of these opinions come from technology journalists — a jaded lot and, frankly, not the market the Air is designed for.

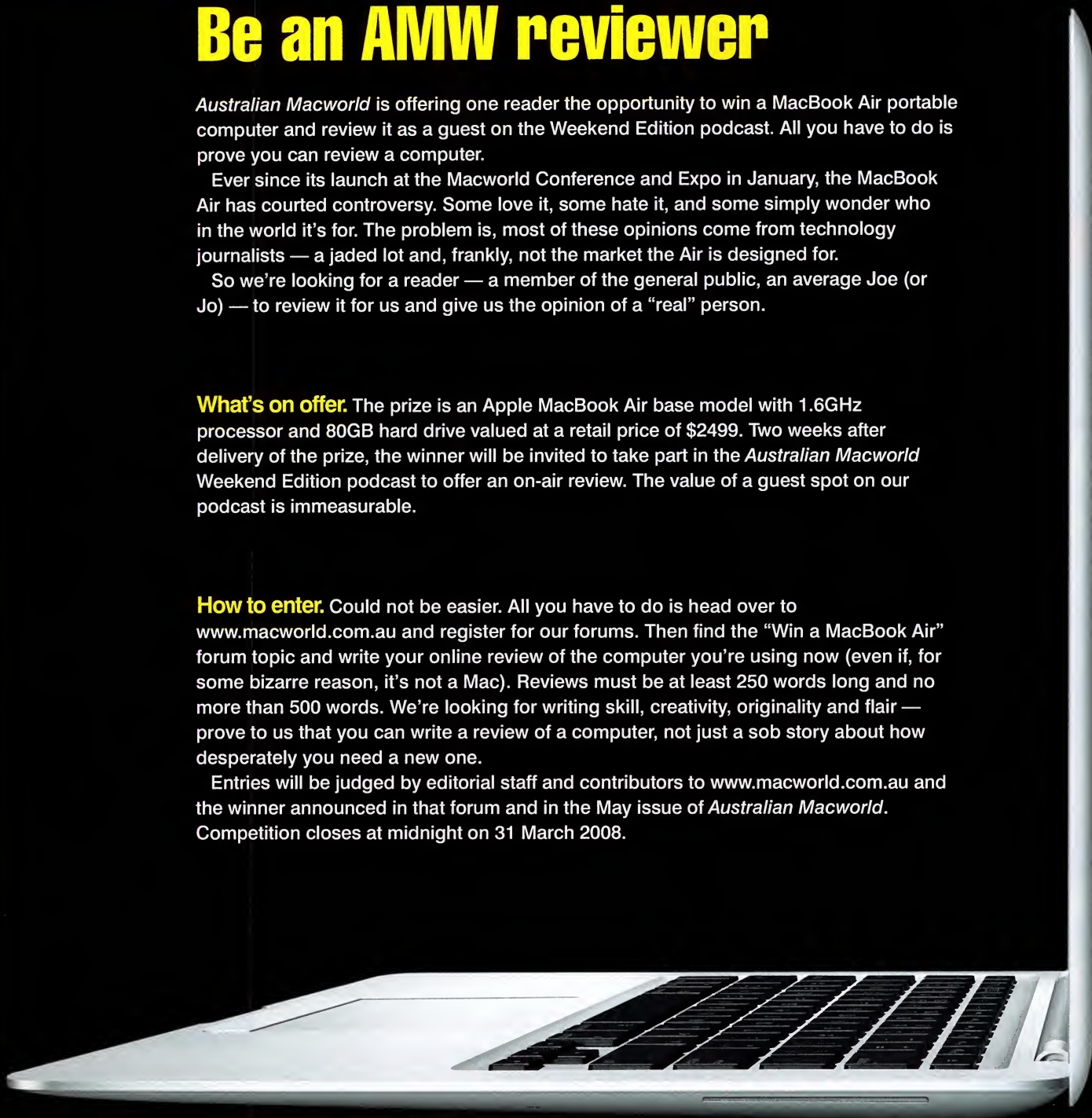
So we're looking for a reader — a member of the general public, an average Joe (or Jo) — to review it for us and give us the opinion of a "real" person.

What's on offer. The prize is an Apple MacBook Air base model with 1.6GHz processor and 80GB hard drive valued at a retail price of \$2499. Two weeks after delivery of the prize, the winner will be invited to take part in the *Australian Macworld* Weekend Edition podcast to offer an on-air review. The value of a guest spot on our podcast is immeasurable.

How to enter. Could not be easier. All you have to do is head over to www.macworld.com.au and register for our forums. Then find the "Win a MacBook Air" forum topic and write your online review of the computer you're using now (even if, for some bizarre reason, it's not a Mac). Reviews must be at least 250 words long and no more than 500 words. We're looking for writing skill, creativity, originality and flair — prove to us that you can write a review of a computer, not just a sob story about how desperately you need a new one.

Entries will be judged by editorial staff and contributors to www.macworld.com.au and the winner announced in that forum and in the May issue of *Australian Macworld*. Competition closes at midnight on 31 March 2008.

Conditions of entry. Instructions on How to Enter form part of the Conditions of Entry. Entry is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand and a few other Pacific nations where we distribute the magazine, with the exception of employees of Niche Media Pty Ltd (ABN 13 064 613 529), their immediate families and agencies (including contractors). The prize consists of an Apple MacBook Air valued at \$2499 and a guest slot on the Australian Macworld Weekend Edition podcast. Entries can only be submitted via the "Win a MacBook Air" forum on www.macworld.com.au and must be time-stamped prior to midnight on 31 March 2008. Entries beyond that time will not be read. Multiple entries are permitted, but each entry must be a review of a different computer. Judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.





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How to turn web sites into apps

DO you ever get frustrated by the fact that when you close your web browser, you close all the tabs you've got open, including that half-edited message in Gmail, the blog post you were halfway through writing on Wordpress and so on? I do.

Web-based word processors are cool and all, but the whole notion of online apps taking over from proper desktop ones is a bit ridiculous, if only for one reason: they all have to run inside your web browser, which is prone to the type of accidental closure I mentioned above.

Enter "Fluid". This nifty app can convert any web site into a stand-alone Mac app, so that even when you close your web browser, your Fluidised web site stays open in its own app window.

This is ideal for web-based e-mail such as Gmail for example. If you have a lot of e-mail taking up gigabytes of disk space, but rather like having a separate e-mail program to your web browser, Fluid can turn the Gmail site into an app of its own, accessible from the Dock.

MJCP e-mailed me a while back suggesting I look at Fluid in K, and while I saw potential back then, I also found it frustrating, because it didn't provide the same mod-cons that a browser did, such as tabbed browsing. The new version, 0.7, does include tabbed browsing and multiple windows for apps, which makes it much more useful.

Of course, as breathtakingly amazing as it is to have macworld.com.au as a separate icon on your Dock after just a few clicks, there's no particular



black magic going on here — just a clever implementation of Apple's WebCore rendering engine that is used in Safari to display web pages, but also available to other applications that want to use it.

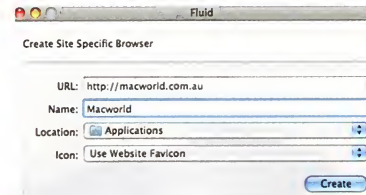
How to do it. The process is as simple as this:

- Download Fluid;
 - Open it;
 - Type in the name of the web site you want turned into an app;
 - Click "Create";
- Easy.

The only problem is that the Dock icons are based on the 16x16 pixel "favicon" files that are shown in your browser favourites, so when they're displayed in the dock, they look a little rough. The Fluid developers thought of that too, allowing you to specify a custom icon for each app you create. There's a nice repository of high-res application icons created by other Fluid users at Flickr (see "Hotlinks") for many of the major web sites people want to Fluidise.

Google goes all iPhone.

Speaking of web apps, there's been quite a bit of movement over at the ranch in Mountain View, California, where Google is headquartered. Google's been hard at work optimising many of the Google sites for the iPhone and iPod touch. Gmail is the latest app to get the iPhone makeover and it now looks



rather like the inbuilt mail client in the iPhone. You might wonder why on earth you'd bother with using a web-based mail client that has been made to look like the iPhone's inbuilt one, and the answer is "search". Yep, of course, Gmail for iPhone has the instant-search-of-your-whole-database that Gmail is famous for.

It joins Google Docs (word processor and spreadsheet) on the iPhone/iPod touch, along with Google Calendar and the excellent RSS reader, Google Reader.

Google's commitment to developing for the iPhone is admirable given Google is developing its own mobile phone software platform called Android with a large consortium of handset manufacturers who are, presumably, all desperate to rid themselves of the backwards doldrum that is Windows Mobile.

In fact, Google has acknowledged that it has seen a large upswing in iPhone and iPod touch traffic.

The New York Times reported that Christmas saw the two generate more traffic than any other mobile device (though, given the infinitesimally small volumes of traffic from mobile devices, that's still not saying much.)

Being an iPhone owner myself, I do think that Apple has got the mobile web just about right on this device. Hopefully the second-gen iPhone will have 3G/HSDPA for faster download speeds, and hopefully a slightly faster internal processor to speed up the rendering of pages, so we can truly have the web in our pockets at last. ☺

Hotlinks

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Fluid
www.flickr.com/groups/fluid_icons/
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www.momento.com.au

Momento

www.myphotofun.com.au

MyPhotoFun

www.myreflections.com.au

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www.camerahouse.com.au

Camera House

www.digitaldavinci.com.au

Digital Da Vinci



DIGITAL photography has done more than merely change the way we take photos, it's also revolutionised the way we appreciate them, enjoy, deal with and store them.

No longer do we fiddle with negatives and slides, and juggle bulging envelopes of prints, not knowing where to put them. Now we can trot down to the local photo store, Big W, Harvey Norman or whatever and print out our images: either to 10x15cm prints or larger; then, by selecting the options, make calendars from our latest shooting efforts, or mouse pads, canvas prints, T-shirts and on.

Many of us do it simple, transferring the images direct from a camera's memory stick at a retail outlet, leaving the store to handle the printing chore rather than sweating over the home inkjet printer. But the real challenge is what to do with the photos from a specific event, like a holiday, wedding, graduation and the like.

This is your opportunity to commission a special publication that may commemorate a special happening, an album with all the bells and whistles – sharp typography, stylish design, solid binding and a substantial look and feel – that befits an important collection of images.

Windows options. Apple has just now finally come to the party with its classy iPhoto book-printing options, which we were unable to test as this issue went to press. However, we were able to glean some information in time. See the sidebar “iPhoto books down under” for more details.

In the long wait for Apple to bring its service here, we had to make do with the offerings on the local market. Fortunately these services are extremely good, with quality offerings. Even now that Apple's service is available here, you might still want to look at some of these local fellows for the differences they offer.

As is often the way, most companies service only Windows customers, so Intel Mac owners can enjoy these products via virtualisation or Boot Camp if you are so inclined. These companies include Album Printer, Click-onprint, MyPhotoFun, My Reflections, Officeworks and Memento.

However if you prefer to stay completely in the Mac zone you won't be disappointed at the choices out there.

Albums. There are two companies specifically supplying the Mac market: HP's Snapfish and Digital Da Vinci. Added to this is Camera House's chain of camera stores, some of which have in-store terminals for you to design and construct your photo book. Big W also has an in-store book production setup with the books completed by an outside facility.

It's worthwhile to factor in the cost of the book compared to making (at home) a set of separate, equivalent prints. You may be surprised to find that a collection of prints shaped into the guise of a photo album is very cost effective – let alone the time you spend yourself in the making of a set of prints.

The maths: make 40 A4-size photo quality prints and you will be lucky to get the cost under \$40, if you take into account the cost of quality paper and ink. The photo books described here start at \$30, so this route is certainly cost effective, let alone the glam factor of a bound book.

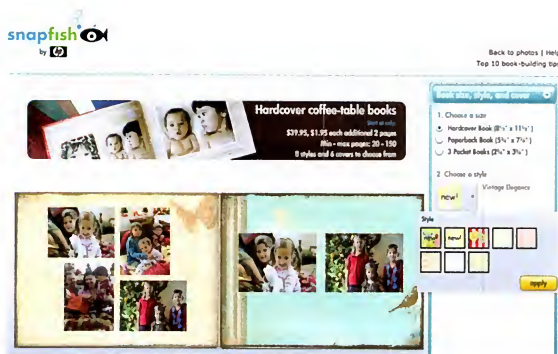
Ostensibly, the making of a photo book entails some effort on your part and it's worth your while paying attention to this when preparing and ordering your book.

First up, polish your images as far as you can in Photoshopper or similar, get the brightness levels right and make sure you're happy with their look. Work out a running order: remember, it's a book, so what you see on page one is followed by page two, page three etc – number them consecutively.

Design a cover page; use an image from the collection, perhaps glitz it up a bit, make it mono, sepia, posterise the colour or whatever. Add a title.

To assemble this story I ordered from three companies. These companies serve the Mac community very well, each differing, each varying in price. For the trial I devised demo albums with 40 pages of images; in the case of the Camera House service the page count had to be lowered to 32 pages – the maximum in this system.





The most platform-neutral is the Camera House option: you don't even need to own a computer! Load your images onto a CD, memory card or flash drive, take it into the retailer and do the job yourself – if you're unsure or a little nervous, ask the staff for help.

Hewlett-Packard's Snapfish is an impressive beast in that it not only services both Windows and Mac users but you set up the layout and design yourself, thanks to an interface sitting directly on the HP's servers. At the end of the session you order the book and it is posted to you in about four days.

Digital Da Vinci is a class act and you pay a premium for it. It's open to Windows and Mac users by dint of the fact that you deliver an Acrobat PDF file with all your pictures on it, in the desired order and size. The final book is posted back to you within 14-21 working days.

Camera House. This Hewlett-Packard system is installed in more than 70 Camera House stores across Australia and is a very different experience, apparent when you face the operating terminal and its touch screen.

I loaded my CD of 100 family images – but I could equally have slipped in any type of memory card or USB flash drive. Fortunately I had numbered the CD's images, so the system loaded them in the desired order. Next I decided on the largest book format (12×12 inches/30×30 cm), but I could equally have gone for 8.5×11 inches/216×279.5 mm or 7×9 inches (180×240 mm).

My next option was to decide on the number of images per page. In my case four, but I could have gone for any number between one and nine; then to choose an unintrusive, decorative page background – and the clever HP software went ahead and made the book on screen, before my eyes. I could then polish individual images, remove red eye, alter the brightness, crop etc. All of this took no more than 30 minutes. Press the print button, select a cover colour (red, green, blue, black) pay the shop \$49.95 and wait for my final 32 page book – about 15 minutes.

One of the few downsides is that you have to leave the page layout to the system but this does simplify the task.

Some additions to book creation will appear later this year: a cut out window front cover is one option, along with extra cover colours.

Few will notice that the printing was made with a colour laser printer. Image quality is close to photographic.

Snapfish. I took an inordinate amount of time with this service, partly due to "operator dimness" and partly because I wanted to approach it as a novice user. You may face a similar experience but when you order subsequent books, your layout time will drop dramatically. The set-up does take a bit of getting used to and the unfortunate thing is there is no phone help – just online help.

You begin by logging in, giving your e-mail address and establishing a password. Next step is to choose the type of book you want: hard cover (US Letter size: 8.5×11 inches/216×279.5 mm), paperback (5.75×7.75 inches/146×197 mm) or one of three pocket book styles.

I went for a hard cover book to house my yachting photos. Next I chose the colour of the cover (black, dark or light blue, green, red, pink). I then decided on the style of background design for the pages (plain, stripes, baby, antique etc). I went for the hard cover book in US Letter size. The neat thing about this format is that there is a cute window cutout in the cover, peeking onto the book's title page.

At this point you must upload all your images to the Snapfish site, which can take a minute or so per image.

Momento

While servicing Windows users with downloadable software, this company could, in one fashion, be accessed by Mac users, as it accepts a group of pictures in PDF form (similar to Digital Da Vinci), ready for creation of a photo book. However, this PDF service is only available to high end, pro users, who are required to register with Momento.

The pages are printed with an HP Indigo system (as are the Snapfish books). Hard cover book sizes range from 210×210mm, 210×297 mm, 148×148mm and 148×210mm. A line of spiral-bound diary-format books can also be ordered. Momento's most popular format is the A4 landscape book, which costs a base \$80 plus \$1 per page, so my sample 40-page book would total \$120 plus postage. Express post costs a minimum of \$12, varying with customer location and size of book.

The big difference with this product is that the book is actually bound, with the individual pages stitched together. A number of attractive options include a range of 16 cover colours (from red to blue to purple, etc); laminated, printed dust cover (\$30); embossing of the cover (\$5), etc. The pages are printed on 170gsm satin paper.

Delivery of the finished book is stated to be 21 days from receipt of order.

Any resolution will do (72 or 300 dpi) but the images must be JPEGs, with the .jpg suffix on the file name.

From here, it's layout all the way: you can select a page with one, two, three or four image 'places' on it; page colour can be selected, the options varying with the style of book chosen; each picture can be bordered (white outline, photo corners or a series of decorative fringes) but only with a plain page colour.

You can add captions in any of three styles (Helvetica-like, serif, script), the chosen font applying throughout the book. Font size is selectable only when you choose a page of text. Be careful to avoid text and background design clashing.

And off you go! There is a preview mode that gives you the full page-turning experience of the final publication. Once you're happy, move to the virtual checkout counter, give your credit card details, mailing address and wait for your masterpiece to arrive.

Total cost came to \$64.40 including postage. Mine took four days, from placing the order to the book's arrival in the mail. Pretty good!

The eagle-eyed will detect the half tone screen, evidence of its origins from the HP Indigo digital offset printer. However, in all other respects, the image quality was excellent.

Digital Da Vinci. This one is a very different horse. Produced in Adelaide, it's possibly the Rolls-Royce of the different books covered in this story – and priced to suit.

For my test book with Digital Da Vinci I chose a personal collection of decorative sheet music covers dating from the early 20th century. Each one was large enough to fill a full page of the final book, totalling 40 pages.

Book prices start at \$99 with delivery in an average of 14 working days. My 40 page effort cost a base \$129 plus a surcharge of \$10 for a vertical format book – plus express postage cost of \$25: total \$164.

The Digital Da Vinci web site has a mountain of information. I began to get a feel for the product by viewing



Camera House

Type of print: Colour laser.

Ease of use: Very easy.

Variety of styles available: Yes.

Quality of printing: Excellent.

Quality of book binding: Crimp bound.

Delivery time: 15 minutes.

Snapfish

Type of print: Indigo digital offset.

Ease of use: Multiple options.

Variety of styles available: Sufficient for most people.

Quality of printing: Excellent.

Quality of book binding: Crimp bound.

Delivery time: Four days.

Digital Da Vinci

Type of print: Not stated.

Ease of use: Variety of page layout software.

Variety of styles available: Wide choice.

Quality of printing: Best in survey.

Quality of book binding: Crimp bound.

Delivery time: Average 12-14 working days.

iPhoto

Type of print: Kodak NEXPRESS 2500

Ease of use: Apple's templates make it a jot.

Variety of styles available: pretty satisfactory.

Quality of printing: not seen at press time.

Quality of book binding: not seen at press time.

Delivery time: "Ships from abroad in 3-4 business days".

the order form that explains the printing specs. Digital Da Vinci offers a range of book styles: soft or hard cover, with some very attractive options like an embossed buckram finish, foil lettering etc.

Book sizes include 148x200mm, US Letter (279.5x216 mm), 295x330 and A3 (297x420 mm). Each leaf in the book is double-sided, so 20 double-sided leaves mean 40 final pages that can carry your images.

The novel factor in this company's product is that you're required to present them with a PDF file of your book makeup; this can be uploaded to Digital Da Vinci's FTP site or mailed to the company as a CD or DVD. This is a positive, as it means you can either use iPhoto, Adobe Acrobat – or, as I did – Microsoft Word to create the book. Each of these applications can export the book in PDF form.

For many people, iPhoto's book mode is possibly ideal, allowing numerous page layouts, multiple image placements per page, choice of background colours etc.

I chose MS Word as my page layout software, as I intended to place a single image per page in my book,

which Word does with minimum fuss. For the title page I made up a JPEG with decorative text and an image scaled to 300dpi; the rest were treated the same way, then I carefully inserted each JPEG image into the Word document. You can also add text to each page as the PDF file conforms the font to become printer-acceptable.

My final PDF file totted up to 368MB, easily written to a CD and posted to Adelaide. It was unfortunate that I had to drop my CD into the post just before Christmas, as on arrival in Adelaide it faced the holiday breaks. Nevertheless, the eagerly awaited book dropped into my letterbox exactly a month later.

Without doubt, the best quality images of all the books. A nice touch was the cover picture.

The last word. In terms of image quality, the Digital Da Vinci book was in the lead but closely followed by the Snapfish and Camera House product. As mentioned

we were unable to test the iPhoto quality in time for this issue.

All three used a binding process that crimped the book's spine to hold the pages together. Some would say this is not book binding in the true sense. However, the Digital Da Vinci and Snapfish books used end papers to meld the printed pages to the books' covers — a more polished approach.

Another key differentiator is time. Digital Da Vinci obviously takes longer to produce a classier product. The Camera House option allows you to pick up your finished book the same day. In between are the rest. iPhoto promises its books ship in 3-4 days, but they're shipping "from abroad" (Apple won't say where they're being printed) so a lot can happen to delay your order.

In deciding which service to use, you have to weigh up the considerations of quality, time and cost, and decide which factor means most to you. ☞

iPhoto book printing

It's been nearly six years since the ability to print books, photos, greeting cards and calendars directly from iPhoto's interface was announced, and just as this issue was being prepared the service arrived here in Australia.

The books are not actually being printed locally though. Australian orders go over to the USA, where books are printed on a Kodak NEXPRESS 2500 digital production colour press — the type of press generally used for printing magazines and the like.

Hardcover books have a glued and crimped binding, with a linen cover — very classy. There are also a variety of softcover sizes available with glued bindings. The largest size of the softcover books allows a cutout on the cover revealing the front-page photo — a very stylish effect.

It's been a while since AMW ordered a book from the USA (via a convoluted system of phony addresses and mail forwarding services) but the printing process hasn't changed since then, and the book we got was pretty impressive in terms of quality. No halftoning, no laser artefacts — it looks like a professionally-printed coffee-table book.

Ordering the same book now would be a considerably less convoluted matter of selecting a template in iPhoto, dragging the photos you want onto the pages and arranging them the way you want, and clicking on the "Order book" button. You're then told "Books usually ship from abroad in 3-4 business days" but Apple Australia estimates delivery in seven days.

Working directly in iPhoto has

its advantages. For one, you have access to your full library, so you can choose photos in combination with others rather than choosing the best images and then doing the layout in isolation. You also have access to iPhoto's editing tools, so if you realise at the layout stage that a particular shot would look better cropped differently or lightened a little or red-eyes eliminated, you can do that and get right back to your book.

It's worth noting, as well, that all such adjustments do need to be made before you click the "Order" button, as Apple will not make any adjustments for you at the production stage. Whatever you send, that's what you'll get back. The only assistance you'll get is a warning if you use a photo that's very low-resolution (something imported from your phone, for instance) you'll get a warning that it won't look good when printed. You'll still be able to print it though — it's your money, after all.

Apple's iPhoto book printing service does not, by any means, replace the other services described in this feature. For each of them you weigh up the factors of price, convenience and quality and see which works best for you. iPhoto books look better than some, but not as good as Digital Da Vinci. They're less expensive than Digital Da Vinci, but not as cheap as others. And at least a week for delivery is not going to beat being able to whip up and album and walk away with it the same day. — M.J.C.P.





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Insights into the Australian Mac community

Global advantage

HE'S back: Phil Morle, founding chief technology officer at Kazaa, geek-at-large and man with his own Wikipedia entry, has left online storage startup OmniDrive to form his own business based in Australia, a consultancy dubbed Bitzfabriek. "It's exciting, and it's something I've wanted to do for a while," he said.

Bitzfabriek is a "guerrilla strategies" consultancy offering assistance to startups, of which Morle has gleaned considerable experience over the years, from Kazaa to Yoick, YelloYello and OmniDrive, among others. The name alludes to Morle's recent 18 months in Amsterdam, with his wife Kellie — a journalist by trade, who assists with the new business.

"In Holland, we had this amazing bike, like a small car, that allowed us to put the kids in front as well as all our shopping. It was made by a bike factory called Fietzfabriek," Morle said. The implication is clear: Bitzfabriek aims to facilitate similar "on-the-ground" — even guerrilla — IT innovation for businesses. The dynamic duo is making itself available to Aussie startups — Mac- or PC-based — either for set periods, or, say, one day a week.

"We can look at their strategy and optimise it for the real world. Some of that includes very practical things like what's the development process — do you write big long specifications or do you have a more agile process? Where are the developers — are they outsourced or local," Morle said. "And the other part of it is about optimis-



ing the product to make the business objectives."

Many local startups end up moving or selling to the US or somewhere similar quite quickly if they do well. As a result, the tried-and-tested solutions for making such companies succeed are thin on the ground in Australia. Morle says Bitzfabriek already has a number of customers.

"Startups quite often have a somewhat utopian idea for their product and it isn't necessarily making the outcomes that actually benefit the business," he said. "And I'm really enjoying helping them, and I'm learning a lot from all these companies too."

Real goal-setting. Technology has changed, he says, since the original dot.com boom — and bust — in the late '90s. And the main reason is that most of the infrastructure has changed. All the infrastructure is already there in web servers and the like and it's affordable. Yet cost blow-outs from earlier dot.com projects where users — all inspiration and little experience — refused to give up on a good idea means that strict target-setting and goal-setting is needed to avoid disaster.

"So I set myself a goal with some of my own projects, that they have to be in a useful state within about two months and cost less than \$10,000," Morle said.

Morle himself was working on a Twitter-like application at the time of writing, called GOALSY, for managing users' goals. That's slated for launch in February-March.

Another IT business lesson from the last ten years of technology advances and globalisation is offshoring. Morle points out that, for all the negative comment around offshoring of developer skills to places overseas, the practice actually also encourages local innovation and opportunity because it brings much more ambitious projects within the reach of small companies. "Generally, all the startups I've had experience with in Australia have been unfunded ... Most Australian startups don't have anything like the budget they need," Morle said. "Yet they've got the innovation."

That gives those small startups the chance to make money out of their ideas — which breeds profit, which breeds growth, which helps sustain more innovation, and so on. Clever

Hotlinks

www.philmorle.com

Phil Morle's blog, "Technology for Humans"

www.bitzfabriek.com

"Guerrilla Technology Strategies for StartUps"

www.dataportability.org

Data Portability

outsourcing can help many projects get off the ground that may never have had the chance when you had to rely on local resources alone. Bitzfabriek collaborates with a number of India-based developers and IT experts — contacts Morle has built up over the years.

"Most of my clients use Indian offshoring," he said. "India is highly skilled and has great English language skills."

The developed world enjoys material standards of living unlike any before, in any stage of history, and many parts of the developing world are starting to catch up. Part of the credit for that may be laid firmly at the door of innovation and success in business. And Morle hints that he believes that even more innovation — leading to success — in business may improve our lifestyles even

more. Skilled individuals working from home, or remotely, more, may be one example of that happening, he suggests. "By outsourcing what you can, you can approach the idea of the four-day work week. You can optimise your life and actually do that."

More in store. Morle says that OmniDrive failed to meet certain expectations he had regarding working conditions, and so he had decided to move on. "I did it for six months or so. What excited me about OmniDrive still excites me so I'm still putting energy these days into serious stuff on data portability," he said.

Data Portability is a group of people whose technological background focuses on making data portable in ways users can properly control — for their own ends, not just those of third-parties. If you think about it, users

put some data on FaceBook, some on Hotmail, some at work in Lotus Notes or Microsoft Outlook, some on a home hard drive, some on Twitter; the list of repositories — some more efficient in their setup than others — is almost endless.

But it would be great if all the information could be rationalised and stored so it would work together better; it would be fabulous if, say, you could add someone on LinkedIn, and, in one click, add them to FaceBook and your standard e-mail contacts book as well. It would be fabulous — and the data portability group is working toward it. "If you click on all those friends' e-mail addresses, you should be able to import that to Outlook. It's just another piece of software and we should be able to move our own data around," said Morle. "That's garnering a whole lot of interest." ☞

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SEE THE L

We answer your questions about the MacBook Air, Apple's slimmest laptop ever

THE arrivals of the MacBook and the MacBook Pro in 2006 meant the demise of the 12-inch PowerBook G4. Ever since, fans of small, light laptops have been hoping that Apple would come out with a Mac that was smaller and lighter than the 13-inch MacBook. With the introduction of the MacBook Air, Apple has finally fulfilled those hopes.

Making a laptop that weighs 1.36 kilograms and measures less than two centimetres at its thickest point requires compromise. What makes the MacBook Air different from other thin-and-light notebooks is that — in typical fashion — Apple has chosen to make different compromises than other notebook vendors.

Our first hands-on look at the MacBook Air is online, as is a first review of the HDD version of the MacBook Air (see "Hotlinks"). We'll have a review of the SSD version as soon as we've had a play with one.



LIGHT

Hotlinks

www.macworld.com.au/reviews/view/macbook-air-228

First review of the MacBook Air

www.macworld.com.au/blogs/view/hands-on-with-air-198

First hands-on play with the MacBook Air

So what exactly is the MacBook Air? Whether you call it a “thin-and-light notebook” or a “subnotebook,” the MacBook Air is a portable Mac for which size is the main design concern. As noted, it’s very thin and very light. Yet the MacBook Air is a full-fledged MacBook, running a Core 2 Duo processor, with reasonable amounts of RAM and hard-drive space. Its aluminium case is reminiscent of the MacBook Pro and other previous silvery Mac laptops. But its curved edges and tapered shape are unlike anything we’ve ever seen on a Mac laptop. If anything, it most closely resembles a really big iPod nano.

Didn’t Apple try something like this before? The PowerBook Duo series and the PowerBook 2400c were Apple’s last forays into the market for really small laptops. However, both were substantially larger than the MacBook Air. Neither of them lasted. The Duo models were special in that they were dockable — you could insert

them into a docking station, where they’d gain ports, connections to an external display, a keyboard and a mouse, and even access to a faster processor. The 2400c, which was designed for the Japanese market, never made a huge splash in the United States and was never available in Australia. Apple doesn’t offer a docking station for the MacBook Air.

How did Apple make it so thin? For starters, the MacBook Air’s main circuit board is remarkably small — at Macworld Expo, Steve Jobs showed a slide of the board next to a pencil for scale; the board is about as wide as a pencil is long. To get a whole Mac on a board that size, Apple asked Intel to create a special, smaller version of the Core 2 Duo processor (which Intel did — it’s 60 percent of the size of a standard Core 2 Duo). The 2GB of RAM appears to be soldered directly to the board; there are no accessible RAM slots for upgrades. The MacBook Air does without most standard Mac ports and has no optical drive. And its battery isn’t removable. The fixed battery allowed Apple to save space by omitting a battery-access compartment.

No optical drive? How am I supposed to install software or watch movies? Apple’s guess is that you’ll have another computer in your house or office with a built-in CD or DVD drive. That’s why the company is including its new Remote Disc software with each MacBook Air. Install Remote Disc on any optical-drive-equipped Mac or Windows PC to which you have network access. That done, you’ll see a new Remote Disc item in the Finder sidebar on the MacBook Air; click on it, and you’ll see a list of all the computers on your local Bonjour network that have Remote Disc installed. Click on one of those computers, and your MacBook Air will be able to use the drive on that remote system as its own. If your MacBook Air has a catastrophic problem and you need to reinstall Mac OS X, you can do that via Remote Disc. As for watching movies, Apple suggests that you use an iPod, an iPhone, or iTunes. (No, you can’t use Remote Disc to watch DVDs.)

What if I’m not around other computers when I need an optical drive? If you think you’ll really require an optical drive when there are no friendly Remote Disc-equipped systems nearby, you can buy Apple’s external \$139 USB-powered SuperDrive specifically for the MacBook Air (the colour even matches).

What do you mean when you say it “does without most standard Mac ports”? On the right side of the MacBook Air, a drop-down door opens to reveal three ports. (You don’t flip the door open to expose the ports — you pull it down; when you do, the three ports also pull down from within the computer.) There’s a standard speaker-and-headphone minijack, a USB 2.0 port, and a micro-DVI port. Yes, this means that Apple’s three notebook lines require three different connectors to attach

Solid-state drives

When it comes to storage, the MacBook Air offers just one alternative to the standard 80GB drive: you can order the laptop with a 64GB solid-state drive (SSD). The price for that downgrade in storage capacity: \$1408. Why would you pay so much more for less?

Think of SSD as a grown-up version of those flash memory sticks you slip into your Mac’s USB ports. Instead of storing data on spinning platters, as a standard hard drive does, SSDs store data in solid-state memory — either NAND flash memory or SDRAM. Increase that USB stick’s capacity and add an ATA or SATA interface, and you’ve got an SSD.

SSDs seem like the perfect mass storage devices for a notebook. They have no moving parts, so they’re less susceptible to damage from the shocks and jolts of travel. SSDs can withstand ten times as much impact as a standard hard drive. They also deal well with vibration.

Then there’s an SSD’s parsimonious power consumption. Powered down, SSDs consume virtually no juice — somewhere around 0.05w. Even when operational, an SSD draws only 1w or so — about a third the consumption of a comparable hard drive.

In terms of seek times and throughput, SSD performance is about equal to that of a standard hard drive. However, SSDs turn on instantly: They don’t have to spin up platters as hard drives do, so they reduce computer boot, restart, and wake-up times substantially.

In addition to being sturdier, more power efficient, and faster than standard hard drives, SSDs are also slightly lighter and can, if necessary, be moulded into different form factors to fit tight spaces. The circular platters of a hard drive don’t allow for that kind of design flexibility.

As Apple’s pricing indicates, SSDs are still extremely expensive. However, the cost of NAND memory is declining by about 40 percent per year. In other words, while solid-state drives may be extremely expensive now, they’ll likely become more reasonably priced — and, therefore, more mainstream — in the near future. — *Jon L. Jacobi*

MacBook Air: inside and out

How did Apple get a real computer in such a slim case? With clever design and several compromises.

A built-in iSight camera makes video chats a snap.

The display is as big as the MacBook's, but it uses an LED backlight like the 15-inch MacBook Pro's. That should make for better colour and lower power consumption.

The large trackpad supports multi-finger gestures for moving windows, panning around photos, and more.

The keyboard is full size and backlit, too.

The MagSafe connector is on the left side, near the back, in a slightly recessed space on the MacBook Air's underside

Yep, it's thin: the wedge-shaped MacBook Air narrows from just 1.96cm in the back to a wafer-thin 4mm in front.

The front of the MacBook Air has a sleep indicator and an infrared receiver — but no Apple Remote is included.

Search as hard as you like for an optical drive slot — you won't find one. Instead, you'll have to pay \$139 for the external SuperDrive or install the included Remote Disc software on a neighbouring computer and use its optical drive instead.

Look on the bottom for a battery door and you won't find that, either: The MacBook Air's battery is not user-replaceable. Instead, you'll have to let Apple do it — which could be inconvenient if you run out of juice in the middle of a flight. Make sure your plane seat is near an outlet, and bring your AC adapter with you

Ports are located on the right side of the MacBook Air, in a drop-down door. (Yes, the ports are in the door; pull it down, and the three ports come down with it.)

them to an external display – mini-DVI for MacBooks, DVI for MacBook Pros, and micro-DVI for MacBook Airs. The MacBook Air ships with two video adapters in the box, one for VGA and one for DVI. An optional adapter with S-Video and composite is also available.

What can the micro-DVI port do? Though the MacBook Air uses the smaller micro-DVI port rather than the MacBook's built-in mini-DVI, the computer otherwise has the same video capabilities as the MacBook: it will drive external displays as large as 1920x1200 pixels, including Apple's 23-inch Cinema Display, and it can use that display either as an additional monitor or to mirror the laptop screen's contents. The MacBook Air also uses the same integrated graphics processor as the MacBook – the Intel GMA X3100 with 144MB of shared memory.

I don't see any mention of Ethernet connectivity. The MacBook Air doesn't include it. If you need Ethernet, Apple sells a \$39 10/100Base-T USB Ethernet adapter that connects to the USB port. For connectivity, the MacBook Air has built-in 802.11n wireless networking and Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR.

What else is missing? This is the first Mac in a long time without a FireWire port, which means that you probably won't be using it for traditional camcorder-style video capture. Also, there's no Kensington cable slot.

What about the display? Did Apple shrink the screen, too? Thankfully, no. Like the MacBook, the MacBook Air has a 13.3-inch wide-screen display with 1280x800-pixel resolution. But the two models' screens differ: the MacBook Air uses an LED (light-emitting diode) for its backlight, just like the 15-inch MacBook Pro. Apple says that the LED backlight produces vibrant colours while saving energy. According to Apple, the LED backlight also reaches full brightness immediately after being turned on, as opposed to other backlights that take a little while to brighten up.

How about the trackpad? The trackpad is actually more capable than those on the MacBook and the MacBook Pro: it can recognise multitouch gestures, much like those you use on the iPhone or iPod touch. Using one, two, or three fingers and a combination of tapping, swiping, pinching, and other gestures, you can move a window, pan around a photo, rotate a photo, scroll between photos, and zoom in on a photo. You can configure these gestures in the Keyboard & Mouse preference pane, where you can also view instructional videos on how to use them. To accommodate all this gesturing, the trackpad on the MacBook Air is larger than those on the MacBook or MacBook Pro. It's quite likely that by the

time this issue goes to press or shortly thereafter Apple will have announced an update to the other MacBook lines that adds this more-capable trackpad.

What kind of storage does it have? The MacBook Air comes with a 1.8-inch, 80GB, 4200-rpm Parallel ATA hard drive. But users can upgrade to a 64GB solid-state drive (SSD). Although the 64GB drive provides less total storage, the SSD technology should be faster; since we'd expect the MacBook Air's stock drive to be a bit poky, the speed difference could be notable. An SSD should also be more durable. With no moving parts, SSDs are silent and shock resistant, and use less power than traditional hard drives. (See the sidebar "Solid-state drives" for more details on that technology.)

Why didn't Apple just use SSD as the standard? High-capacity SSDs are new, and as such are very expensive right now. The upgrade will run you a cool \$1408 from Apple, so you'll pay a high price to be on the cutting edge.

What kind of processing power can I expect? The MacBook Air's processors aren't as speedy as the ones on the MacBook Pros or even the current MacBooks. In the base configuration, the MacBook Air is powered by an Intel Core 2 Duo processor running at 1.6GHz; you can order a model containing a 1.8GHz processor for an additional \$430. Each of these processors includes 4MB of shared L2 cache running at full processor speed, and each connects to the 800MHz system bus.

It comes with 2GB of RAM, but I like to max out my systems — is there a build-to-order option for more RAM? The fact that the MacBook Air includes 2GB of RAM standard is both the good news and the bad news – good in that it's twice as much as you'll find in many other Mac models for the base price; bad in that the RAM is (as Apple puts it) "onboard." That means it's probably attached to the motherboard rather than in normal slots – so you can't upgrade it.

How long will the battery last on a single charge? Apple says that you can get up to five hours of battery life from normal use, with Wi-Fi turned on, but your results may vary.

If I'm going on a long flight, can I bring an extra battery like I do with my current Mac laptop? No. Like the iPod's, the MacBook Air's battery is not user-replaceable. And as with the iPod, if the battery needs replacing, you'll need to send your laptop to Apple (and pay if it's out of warranty).

Can I use my current MagSafe adapter? Yes, but only if you let the MacBook Air's left side hang over the




edge of your desk. (The plug sticks out too far.) The new adapter has a different tip – its right-angled shape is designed to nestle snugly against the MacBook Air's side.

Since it has an infrared port on the front, that means it comes with an Apple Remote, right? Nope. Unlike all the other MacBooks, the MacBook Air doesn't include a remote in the box. You can buy one for \$29.

Why is it more expensive than a MacBook if I'm getting less? It takes a lot of work (and a lot of specialised tiny components) to fit an entire computer in a tiny enclosed space. Bigger components are cheaper than smaller ones. As a result, thin-and-light notebooks generally cost more than their larger cousins. The value equation for a thin-and-light notebook is not the same as for your standard laptop: the features you're paying

for are not processor speed or storage size, but rather weight and volume. If low weight and an ultraslim profile are not of primary importance to you in a laptop, the MacBook Air is not for you.

Who will buy it? Unlike the MacBook and MacBook Pro, the MacBook Air isn't designed as a general-purpose computer. Many people will find its lack of connectivity options, an optical drive, a replaceable battery, and upgradable RAM unacceptable. But it could be attractive for business travellers who care about portability most of all – who are willing to sacrifice features to save weight and bulk. If you carry a laptop everywhere you go, but you don't need all the power and ports of a full-size laptop, the MacBook Air may be worthy of serious consideration. 

	MacBook Air	MacBook	MacBook Pro (15-inch)	MacBook Pro (17-inch)
Price (base)	\$2499	\$1599	\$2899	\$3999
Height (cm)	0.4 to 1.94	2.7	2.59	2.59
Width (cm)	32.4	32.5	35.7	39.2
Depth (cm)	22.7	22.7	24.3	26.5
Weight (kg)	1.36	2.27	2.45	3.08
Processor	Intel Core 2 Duo 1.6GHz or 1.8GHz	Intel Core 2 Duo 2GHz or 2.2GHz	Intel Core 2 Duo 2.2GHz, 2.4GHz, or	Intel Core 2 Duo 2.4GHz or 2.6GHz
RAM (standard)	2GB of 667MHz DDR2 SDRAM	1GB of 667MHz DDR2 SDRAM	2.6GHz 2GB of 667MHz DDR2 SDRAM	2GB of 667MHz DDR2 SDRAM
RAM (maximum)	2GB	4GB	4GB	4GB
Storage (standard)	80GB 4200-rpm Parallel ATA	80GB 5400-rpm Serial ATA	120GB 5400-rpm Serial ATA	160GB 5400-rpm Serial ATA
Storage (optional)	64GB solid-state drive	120GB, 160GB, or 250GB 5400-rpm Serial ATA	160GB or 250GB 5400-rpm or 200GB 7200-rpm Serial ATA	250GB 5400-rpm or 200GB 7200-rpm Serial ATA
Optical Drive	no ^a	24x slot-loading Combo drive or 8x slot-loading SuperDrive	8x slot-loading SuperDrive	8x slot-loading SuperDrive
Display (Diagonal inches)	13.3	13.3	15.4	17.0
Display technology	glossy wide-screen LED backlit TFT	glossy wide-screen TFT	wide-screen LED backlit TFT (glossy optional)	wide-screen TFT (glossy optional)
Resolution (native)	1280 × 800	1280 × 800	1440 × 900	1680 × 1050
Graphics processor	Intel GMA X3100 with 144MB of DDR2 SDRAM shared with main memory	Intel GMA X3100 with 144MB of DDR2 SDRAM shared with main memory	Nvidia GeForce 8600M GT with 128MB–256MB of GDDR3 SDRAM	Nvidia GeForce 8600M GT with 256MB of GDDR3 SDRAM
Wi-Fi	built-in AirPort Extreme	built-in AirPort Extreme	built-in AirPort Extreme	built-in AirPort Extreme
Ethernet	no ^b	built-in Gigabit Ethernet	built-in Gigabit Ethernet	built-in Gigabit Ethernet
Bluetooth	Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR	Bluetooth 2.0 + EDR	Bluetooth 2.0 + EDR	Bluetooth 2.0 + EDR
Built-in speakers	mono	stereo	stereo	stereo
Audio out	analogue	optical digital	optical digital	optical digital
USB 2.0 ports	1	2	2	3
FireWire 400 ports	0	1	1	1
FireWire 800 ports	0	0	1	1
DVI output	micro-DVI ^c	mini-DVI ^e	DVI	DVI
VGA output	yes ^d	yes ^f	yes ^g	yes ^g
Kensington cable slot	no	yes	yes	yes
Battery life (hours claimed)	5.0	6.0	6.0	5.8
User-replaceable battery	no	yes	yes	yes

^aExternal USB MacBook Air SuperDrive optional. ^bUSB-Ethernet adapter optional. ^cMicro-DVI-to-DVI adapter included. ^dMicro-DVI-to-VGA adapter included. ^eMini-DVI-to-DVI adapter sold separately. ^fMini-DVI-to-VGA adapter sold separately. ^gDVI-to-VGA adapter included.



Virtually there

VIRTUALISATION can fool operating systems into thinking they're running on their own silicon and copper, but they're actually sharing the hardware with others, running inside another piece of software. Many of us get some exposure to this schizophrenia by having Windows running concurrently with Mac OS on our machines through the use of Parallels or VMware.

Fine for the desktop, but have you ever done this with a server?

Until Leopard, this question was moot as Apple's End User Licence Agreement (EULA) forbade running more than one copy of the server product on a machine, but, with the release of Leopard, the agreement has changed: "This License allows you to install and use one copy of the Mac OS X Server software ... on a single Apple-labelled computer. You may also install and use other copies of Mac OS X Server Software on the same Apple-labelled computer, provided that you acquire an individual and valid license from Apple for each of these other copies of Mac OS X Server Software." Server virtualisation is not a new thing on other machines and operating systems, but, come June of this year, Macs can play in this space as well.

The first entrant is Parallels server (although expect VMWare to announce a similar product before the end of the year), which will technically allow you to, say, run Leopard, Tiger, Windows, Redhat and Ubuntu Linux servers all on the one machine.

Which may prompt you to ask "Why would I want to do this?" To which I would answer "For lots of reasons".

The first and most obvious is to test



"Apple-labelled computer". The folks in Cupertino need to be more specific.

new versions of software, upgrades and modifications. You can do this on the same machine as the production system because the virtualisation process will effectively isolate each system. Isolation of services through virtualisation can improve security, and/or allow the running of legacy server software that you may still need to use.

Further, let's say a high demand service such as an e-mail server needs a hardware upgrade. Normally, your choices are to tell everyone that e-mail will be out for a while, or come in after hours to do the job (although if your place is anything like mine, you'll get a phone call ten minutes after shutdown irrespective of the time)

With virtualisation you close the service, copy the virtual server to a spare machine and restart, taking less than a couple of minutes (although this specific feature is unlikely to make version 1 of Parallels' offering).

The target market for this product is the small to medium enterprise, but there is a really good fit for schools, in that it could also make Mac and Windows coexistence on a network much easier.

In a school situation, the typical method for Mac management on a Windows network is the so-called

"golden triangle" method, involving two servers and the clients, whereby login credentials are managed by Active Directory on Windows (which will also control roaming profiles on Windows clients), with the third leg of the triangle being a Mac OS server to control preferences on Mac clients.

With virtualisation, we could conceivably use an Xserve to run Leopard server, with Parallels providing the environment to run Windows server. Similarly, a Microsoft Exchange server could run in virtual space. These setups could include binding of specific network interfaces to specific servers to prevent any one server hogging the bandwidth, although it should be noted that only the newer Xserves have the necessary Intel Virtualization Technology for Directed I/O (or Intel VT-d for short) capacity to do this.

These types of solutions will only work with Apple hardware, however. Apple wants to ensure quality control over hardware, so the EULA specifically prohibits running Leopard on non-Apple equipment.

It all sounds rosy, but these ideas are only the germs of solutions: your own particular situation needs to be assessed carefully.

For example, as your eggs are being put into fewer baskets, you'd better make sure your baskets are good and strong. The cost of extra memory and the expertise to manage the solution would need to be balanced against the benefits of fewer machines to be managed. Further, you would need a good person on the ground so that your Windows support people don't say "that's on a Virtual Machine, so we will blame it rather than the software."

The case for a strategic alliance between schools and good systems integrators is building. ☒



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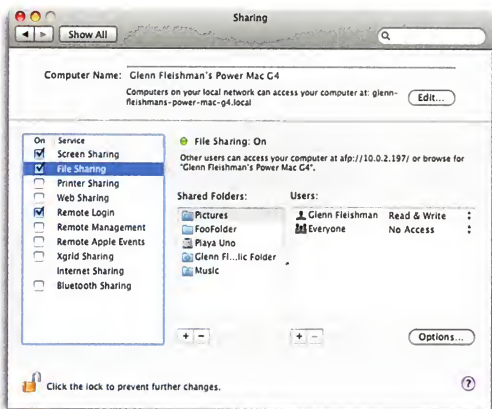
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Guest accounts. You can give guests the ability to log in to your Mac or restrict them to shared folders only.



Share files in Leopard

Mac OS X 10.5 makes it easier than ever to share files

If you want to share files with other people (and who doesn't these days?), you can always send the files via e-mail or iChat. But it's far more efficient just to give your collaborators shared access to the files, folders, and volumes on your Mac and let them get the files themselves.

Unfortunately, OS X hasn't always made file sharing easy. Tiger and preceding versions of Mac OS X lacked some file-sharing features — such as the ability to share folders as networked volumes — found even in Mac OS 9; plus the tools you used to configure file sharing weren't always as straightforward as they should have been.

The good news is that in Mac OS X 10.5, Apple has dramatically improved the tools you use to share all kinds of resources from your Mac across local networks and the internet. And some of the biggest — and handiest — of these improvements are in the ways Leopard lets you share files, folders, and volumes. In the Sharing preference pane, you can now specify which folders and volumes you want to share, which users get what kind of access, and which file-sharing proto-

col they'll use, all with drag-and-drop ease. Here's how it works.

What to share. To start, launch System Preferences, select the Sharing pane, and select File Sharing in the Service list.

At that point, you'll see two windows: Shared Folders and Users. As the name implies, you use the first one to share entire folders and volumes. You can add a folder or volume to the Shared Folders list in two ways: drag it from the Finder into the Shared Folders window, or click on the plus-sign (+) button and navigate to the folder you want to share.

You can choose to share any mounted volume — including a disk image — that isn't itself a network volume. You can share the entire volume or any directory within it. By default, this list already includes your public folder.

Note that you can also share folders and volumes in the Finder by selecting an item, choosing File: Get Info, and selecting General: Shared Folder.

With whom to share. In previous versions of Mac OS X, if you wanted to share files with someone, you had to set up a new account, with its own

unique login and password. In Leopard, the process is much simpler.

Now you can add or remove users and groups in the Users list. To remove one or more people, you select a user or group and click on the minus (–) button. To add users, you click on the plus button; when you do so, you'll see a list of users and groups in the Accounts preference pane. You'll also see an entry for your Address Book; you can choose any contact, click on Select, and set a password, creating a Sharing Only account.

You can create entirely new users by clicking on the New Person button in the unlabelled dialog box that appears when you click on the plus button. Any new users you create here will also appear in the Accounts preference pane as Sharing Only users. (The Guest account isn't listed here because it's included as part of the special Everyone group, and is not available otherwise.)

Warning: Do not remove or modify the default users for the startup volume or for special folders like System or Library. Doing so could disable Mac OS X and require a boot from the startup DVD and a trip through Disk



Sharing preference pane. In Leopard's Sharing preference pane, you can specify which folders and volumes you want to share, with whom, and how.

Utility's Repair Permissions tool.

Leopard lets you configure file access for certain special classes of users, as well as for the people in your Address Book and Accounts lists.

If you look at the Accounts preference pane, you will see a user named Guest. This account lets other people use your Mac without compromising the security of your own account. But it also gives them password-free access to volumes you choose to share. So if you select the Guest user in the Accounts preference pane and enable the Allow Guests To Connect To Shared Folders option, anyone with network access to your Mac will be

able to access your shared folders without having to provide a password. (The Guest account can't access files via FTP.)

You can also set up a new account type: Sharing Only. As the name implies, a Sharing Only account has remote access to shared folders and volumes on the Mac on which the account is set up, but no login privileges on that Mac.

You can create Sharing Only users in the Accounts preference pane by creating a new account and selecting Sharing Only from the New Account drop-down menu. You can also create a new Sharing Only user from the File Sharing pane by clicking on the plus button under the Users list; by default, that new user will be granted Sharing Only privileges. (Sharing Only users can access remote volumes only via Apple Filing Protocol [AFP], not FTP or Samba.)

You can select any folder or volume that you added in Shared Folders, and set specific access rights that correspond to users or groups of users. When you select a shared item, the Users list to its right fills with any existing permissions. For a folder in your home directory, you are usually

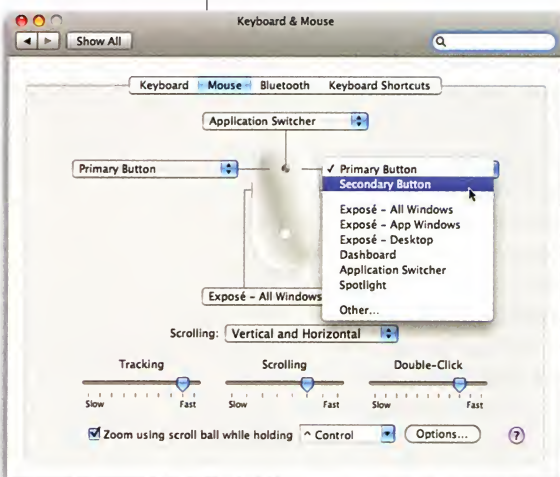
listed along with the special Everyone user, which sets access for all accounts on the computer, including the Guest user.

You can specify one of four kinds of access rights — read only, read-write, write only, or no access — via the drop-down menu to the right of the user or group name. Read-write access gives users complete creative and destructive rights to all files in the shared folder. Users with read-only access can view files and folders, but they can't change them. With write-only access, they can copy documents into the folder, but they can't view its contents. (That's why Apple helpfully appends the phrase Drop Box to the Write Only entry in the menu.)

Drop boxes are useful when you're trying to let people submit information but prefer to give them no other access to the system. By default, Mac OS X sets up a shared Public folder in each user's home directory: the folder is set to read-only status, and a Drop Box folder inside Public is set to write-only status.

How to share. With permissions for access set, you now need to choose the method — and protocol — you use to share files. Leopard, like Tiger

Mouse settings. This panel holds the key to making your mouse more useful. Use the pop-up menus to set each button to perform a different function.



Make your mouse truly mighty

Most of us don't think twice about our mice — and I'm not talking about the kind that scurry across the kitchen floor, but about those from the subgenus *Electronica iuncta*. There's a lot of power hiding in the roller-ball mouse — aka Mighty Mouse — that has shipped with new Macs since the Spring of 2005.

Two buttons are better than one.

First stop: the Mouse tab of the Keyboard & Mouse preference pane (see the screenshot "Mouse settings"). Give yourself a second mouse button here so you can easily access

contextual menus. Click on the pop-up menu to the right of the mouse, and select Secondary Button. Now you can just tap the right side of the mouse for contextual menus, instead of control-clicking every time.

One-click access. Now customise your mouse to make it work as you'd like — use the other pop-up menus to pick the functions you use the most and assign one to each button. For example, you can set a button to activate a given Exposé mode, Dashboard, Application Switcher (⌘-tab), or the Spotlight search box. If you

and Panther, offers built-in support for AFP, FTP and Samba.

Leopard improves tremendously on previous versions of OS X by making all three services accessible from one central location. Unfortunately, you can't specify what you want to share according to each sharing protocol. The permissions you grant to any given volume, folder, user, or group stay the same no matter which sharing protocol you use.

To specify how a given resource will be shared, click on the Options button in the File Sharing pane and select the protocol you want.

Typically you'll want to use AFP when sharing among Mac users.

Previous implementations of AFP used unencrypted passwords, which created a security risk, but this is no longer the case. Unfortunately, that means some older systems may not be able to connect to your Mac if you're using AFP. Also, if systems that aren't yet using Mac OS X try to connect to a Leopard AFP server, you'll have to enable AppleTalk on the interface over which you're sharing. (Go to the Network preference pane, select the appropriate adapter and then its AppleTalk tab, and turn that option on

or off; note that only one adapter can have AppleTalk active at a time.)

Samba is the best option if you're sharing files among mixed Mac, Windows, and Linux or Unix systems. Samba passwords are stored with weaker security than those used for Mac OS X, but to exploit even this weaker encryption, a malicious hacker must have access to the Samba password file; passwords in transit can't be cracked by any known means.

FTP offers the most unrestricted access to your files, but that's not necessarily a good thing: Leopard allows any full user account to connect via FTP without paying attention to the Shared Folders list of accessible shared volumes and folders. FTP users can traverse all mounted drives to which they have at least read-only permission.

FTP doesn't encrypt passwords at all, so it's unsuitable for use on any public network. You could use Secure FTP (SFTP), which uses strong encryption, but it isn't integrated into Leopard's File Sharing service. Instead, you enable SFTP by turning on the Remote Access service. SFTP lacks the configuration options of FTP, so all physically connected local

volumes are shared.

How to access files. Once you've set up file sharing, other users can access your Mac by selecting it from the Shared list in the Finder. By default, Mac OS X will connect as a Guest. If you want to connect as a non-Guest user, click on the Connect As button and enter the appropriate user name and password. Resources shared in Samba, whether from another Mac, a PC, or a Unix box, show up with a Windows blue-screen-of-death icon (very witty, Apple). AFP icons correspond to the specific Mac model.

To connect to a server outside your local network, choose Go: Connect To Server from the Finder. Enter an IP address, a domain name, or even a Bonjour name to connect to AFP servers. For SMB or FTP, precede the name with smb:// or ftp://, respectively. For FTP, you can also use a stand-alone file-transfer program.

With both local and remote networks, Leopard no longer shows the mounted volumes on the desktop by default. Choose Finder: Preferences and click on General, and then select Connected Servers to show networked volumes on the desktop.

— *Glenn Fleischman*

have a file (a program or document) that you use a lot, check out the Other entry at the bottom of the pop-up menu list. Using this, you can put that file one click away from activation.

Scroll ball as button. Notice that the scroll ball also functions as a button — it's very easy to press, so set it to something you access often. (In OS X 10.5, you can even set it as the primary or secondary button.) The left and right buttons (those grey patches that look like finger rests) are much harder to press — due to both their location and the required force — so set them

to activate a command you use less often. (They work together as one.)

Scroll control. The Scrolling pop-up menu controls how the roller ball works — for vertical scrolling, for both horizontal and vertical scrolling, or for 360-degree mode. The difference between the last two is subtle — in the first mode, you can scroll only in one direction at a time; in the second mode, you can scroll diagonally. While it takes some getting used to, this is the mode I prefer. The Tracking, Scrolling, and Double-Click speed sliders are all self-explanatory.

Zoom scrolling. The last feature, Zoom Using Scroll Ball While Holding option, is actually quite powerful. If you have ever found text on a web site too small to read, or have wanted to zoom in and examine a picture in more detail, zoom scrolling is the simplest way to do it. Make sure this option is selected, pick the desired modifier key from the pop-up menu, and then hold that key down and roll your scroll ball up to zoom in and down to zoom out. It doesn't get much simpler than that. — *Rob Griffiths*

Hotlinks

www.mac.com

Information on Back to my Mac

images.apple.com/dotmac/docs/L358808A_BackMac_UG.pdf

Back to my Mac user guide

Get the most of screen sharing

SCREEN Sharing and its elegant integration with Finder were introduced with Leopard. When it's enabled, you can connect to other computers and control them remotely. It can be used to control computers both while you're connected to your home network or over the internet. You'll need a Mac running at least OS X 10.5.1 and a .Mac account to use Screen Sharing over the internet.

Setting up Screen Sharing. The first step in using Screen Sharing is to enable it. Launch Preferences, open the Sharing pane and check the Screen Sharing box to enable the service. If you want to limit access to specific users you can do that easily by selecting specific users using the options on the preference screen. Repeat this for each of the computers you wish to be able to control remotely.

Once Screen Sharing is enabled you should be able to see all the available computers in Finder's Sidebar under the Sharing section. Select the computer you wish to control and the Finder will display any folders you may have shared. At the top of the Finder window there will be a Share Screen button. Press the button and a few moments later you'll see the other computer's screen.

Back to my Mac. Back to my Mac uses .Mac as an intermediary to allow computers to use Screen Sharing over the internet. Open Preferences and go to the .Mac preference pane. Open the Back to my Mac tab and start the service. This will require an active .Mac account.

Chances are that this still won't work as the computer on the internet isn't going to be able to penetrate your home network. You'll need to tell your router that it's allowed accept requests for Screen Sharing, and which machines will be accessible. To that, you'll need to delve into the settings for your router. We'll go through the settings using a Netgear router. However, the settings are generic to most routers. You'll need the instructions that came with your device

Log into the router using a web browser using the network address specified in your instructions. There will be an option available that lists all of the devices connected to the router. On the Netgear router we're using, the op-

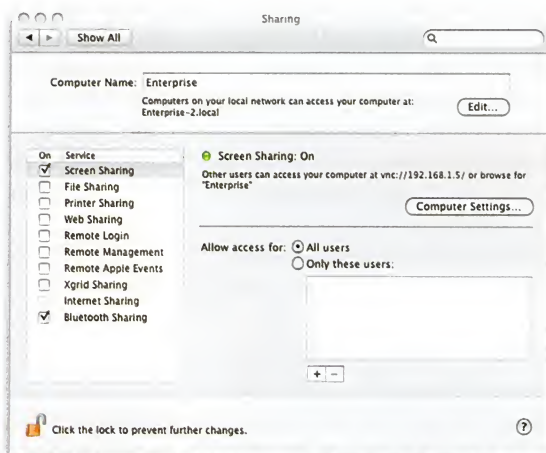
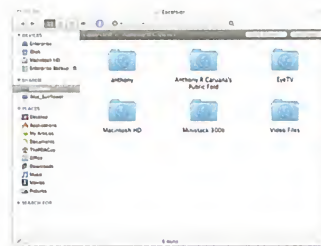
tion's called "Attached Devices". Look at the list and identify the name of the computer you'll be remotely accessing and make a note of its network, or IP, address.

When you restart a computer on your home or office network it's likely that it'll be allocated a different network address each time it connects. In order to make sure the system you'll be controlling remotely has the same address each time it restarts you can allocate an address for it. On our Netgear router this is called an "Address Reservation". Create a reservation for the computer that will be remotely accessed by following the instructions in your router's manual.

Find the Port Forwarding option for your router and create a route that opens Port 5900 for the machine that will be remotely accessed. Save any changes you've made and log out for the router's settings.

If you're using one of Apple's routers, the Airport Extreme or Airport Express, Apple provides a set of detailed instructions (see "Hotlinks").

The proof of the pudding. If all goes well you'll be able to access your desktop computer from the internet. Connect your portable Mac to the internet and in the Finder, you'll notice that computer you've set up for remote access is still listed. Click on the name and hit the Share Screen button. A few moments later, you'll be able to control the computer over the internet. — Anthony Caruana



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The ultimate clock radio and speaker system for iPod. X-Bass™ added bass boost. Digital tuning and 5 station presets. Four equalizer settings to choose from. AA battery power-backup. Sleep mode 10-90 minutes. Aux-in connects another Mp3 player. Works with apple remote. Dock & charge. Compatible with all dockable iPods.



DLO iTuneStik with remote

Wireless FM transmitter plus RF remote control in one package. Transmit iPod audio to any nearby FM radio - in the car or at home. Compact RF remote for easy iPod playback control from up to 25ft. Remote features digital FM-frequency display and four programmable presets. Steering-wheel cradle included for safe iPod control while you drive. Pass-through iPod dock connector for use with other iPod accessories.



DLO HomeDock Music Remote

Dock & control your iPod while you browse & control wirelessly from anywhere in the house. Displays iPod instantly. Build a playlist on the fly, charge your iPod & Music Remote in the base dock. Ready to go out of the box.



DLO PowerBug

USB A/C Charger is a Made for iPod Authorised Product. So you know that you are getting quality. Charge your iPod or any other USB device.

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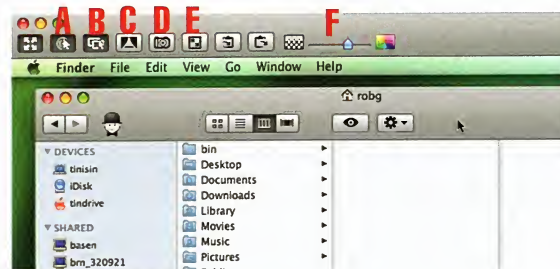
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Power up screen sharing

You can add some hidden functionality to the Screen Sharing tool. Quit Screen Sharing, switch to Terminal, and type the following (all on one line):

```
defaults write com.apple.ScreenSharing 'NSToolbar Configuration ControlToolbar' -dict-add 'TB Item Identifiers' '(Scale,Control,Share,Curtain,Capture,FullScreen,GetClipboard,SendClipboard,Quality)'
```

When you relaunch Screen Sharing, you should see five new buttons and a slider on your toolbar. (If you can't see the toolbar, use View: Show Toolbar to make it visible.) See the screenshot "Customise screen sharing" for a rundown of what each button does. These features don't always work flawlessly, but for the most part they run just fine. — Dennis Wilkinson and Daniel Steffen



Customise screen sharing. The second button in the row **A** switches between letting you control the remote Mac (the default) and simply observing the other machine. The next one **B** switches between allowing the person at the remote Mac to use its keyboard and mouse (the default) and locking him or her out. The fourth button **C** locks the other Mac's screen, displaying an all-black background, a huge lock icon, and any text you enter after clicking on the button. The fifth button **D** captures the remote Mac's full screen to a local file; the system will ask you to pick a name and a save location. The sixth button **E** toggles between windowed (the default) and full-screen modes. In full-screen mode, the toolbar floats in the upper left corner of the screen. To exit full-screen mode, click on the X in the toolbar. If screen updates are going slowly, you can use the slider **F** to reduce the image quality — all the way down to a badly dithered black-and-white view — and speed things up.

Secret screen savers

If you're tired of Leopard's built-in screen savers, a slew of Quartz Composer compositions hidden in the System folder can add visual variety to your Mac's dozing screen. To try them, first quit System Preferences if it's running. Go to /System/Library/Compositions and drag as many of these files as you like from there to your user folder/Library/Screen Savers. (Create this folder yourself if it doesn't already exist.) Not all of these Quartz compositions will work as screen savers. In general, if you can see a moving image in the Finder's preview pane, the file should work. I've found that Defocus.qtz, Fall.qtz, Grid.qtz, Image Hose.qtz, Moving Shapes.qtz, Travelator.qtz, and Wall.qtz work quite well. Once you've copied the files, open System Preferences, select Desktop & Screen Saver, scroll down to the Other section of the left pane, and select a new screen saver. Clicking on the Options button will let you tweak the settings on some screen savers.

— "datasmid"

Streamline "Open With"

Sometimes when you control-click on a file to use the Open With contextual menu, you'll see double entries in the list of available programs; you may even see programs you know you've removed from your Mac. What you need to do in that case is rebuild the LaunchServices database. To do so, open Terminal and type (all on one line):

```
/System/Library/Frameworks/CoreServices.framework/Versions/A/Frameworks/LaunchServices.framework/Versions/A/Support/lsregister -kill -r -domain local -domain system -domain user
```

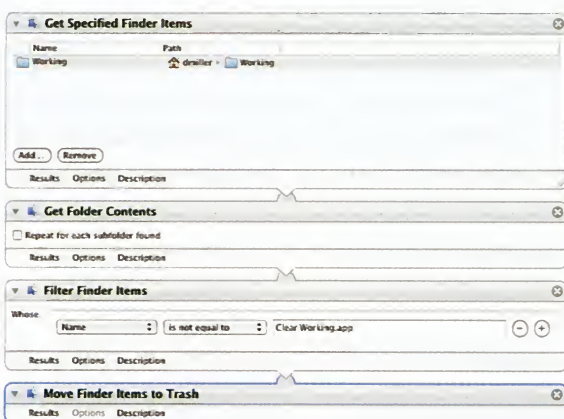
Once you've rebuilt the database, the list of available applications should be dupe-free. — Jan Verbeke

Quickly clear stacks

Leopard's stacks have met a mixed reception, but I've found that I can increase my productivity by creating a Working stack for projects I am currently working on. (First I create a Working folder in my home directory, and then I drag it to the Dock). When I start to work on a project, I drag aliases for all the relevant files into that Working stack (by holding down ⌘-option as I drag the files to the Dock). I then have quick access to all my current files.

While that Working stack helps a lot, it's annoying to have to empty it whenever I finish or switch projects. To fix that, I created an Automator workflow that clears all the files in the stack:

Clear Working.app. With this Automator workflow in your Working stack, you can clear out that folder with a single click.



1. Files & Folders: Get Specified Finder Items Specify the Working folder you created in your home directory.
2. Files & Folders: Get Folder Contents
3. Files & Folders: Filter Finder Items: Name Is Not Equal To Clear Working.app
4. Files & Folders: Move Finder Items To Trash

I then saved this workflow as Clear Working.app and put it into the Working stack itself. Whenever I finish a project, I open the stack and double-click on the Clear Working workflow. — Andrew Wagner

I quit!

Being a relatively new Mac user, as opposed to using the mouse to click on the command, I cannot figure out what the keystrokes are to Force Quit a program from the Apple menu. I understand the ⌘ key, but don't know what the other keys are.

"gramsey"
Via Forums

⌘-option-escape is the keyboard shortcut to Force Quit.

You can also hold down the Option key while holding down the mouse button over the Dock icon of the program you want to force quit. The popup menu will show a "Force Quit" option at the bottom.

— Sean McNamara

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STM Query of the month



Fix a stiff mouse

How on earth do you clean that rotten little scroll wheel on the top of your Mighty Mouse, so it actually scrolls? I have been using isopropyl alcohol on mine for six months now, and I think it must have finally eaten the insides out because it's finally stopped.

"TLCAUS"

Via Forums

Just hold the mouse upside-down in one hand, and gently

wipe the scrollball a few times with an alcohol wipe in the other. This gets more of the gunk off than if you do it with the mouse right-way up.

Next thing to try, if you have the facility, is a bit of compressed air. Push the scrollball in and puff a bit of compressed air around the edges. This can dislodge particles that are big enough to affect the scrolling movement.

If that doesn't work, then I think you're in the market for a new mouse. It's possible to take the Mighty Mouse

apart, clean it and reassemble, but it's also possible to fly a man to the moon and I wouldn't trust myself to do that. — *M.J.C.P.*

Another way to clean the scroll ball is to cut a thin bit of sticky tape 2mm or so wide and 6cm or so long. Put one end of the ball (sticky side on the wheel) and roll the wheel till the tape comes out on the other side. Gently pull the tape back and forth few times and repeat till the entire ball has been cleaned.

— *Anthony Caruana*

Hotlinks

www.hornware.com/sharepoints/
Sharepoints

Fix it in Post?

I recently tried to connect to my HD on my iMac G5 from my PowerBook G4 via Airport File Sharing. Previously I could mount both my HD and Home Folder on the PowerBook, now I get the Home Folder and an item called postfix in the Volumes menu.

When I mount the "postfix" volume it is a folder, not a volume, with a "no entry" sign on it but on Get Info it has exactly the same details as my HD on the iMac. But it is an AppleShare volume and I cannot access the contents.

Also, I can access the HD on my PowerBook no problems from the iMac. Both are running 10.4.11 and up until a couple of weeks ago it worked perfectly.

I rang Apple support and although helpful, they said that my postfix server has been activated on the iMac "somehow" possibly by a Firefox or other update or add-on was responsible. They were unable to tell me how to

fix it except the usual Archive and Install advice.

An internet article said to enter "sudo postfix stop" in the Terminal but that says no "such file" and does not stop the problem. I wonder if you have any clues as to how to fix it other than reinstall, which I dread.

Yes I have run DiskWarrior, repaired permissions, all OK I

also did an Archive Install keeping previous settings and recommended by Apple, no help.

Ken Hoyle

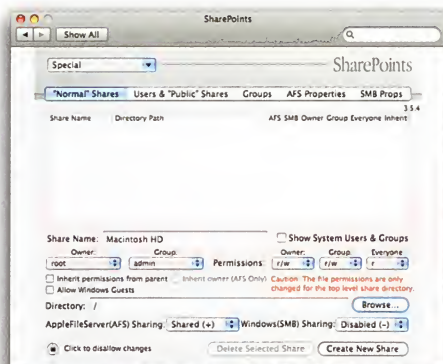
Via e-mail

Postfix is an e-mail server program which, when turned on, should not present a folder as a mount point. Something has gone wrong with the information on your AppleShare shared folders, and we need to try and address that directly (and not bother about Postfix).

First thing I would try is setting up an extra admin user on the iMac, then connecting as that user from the PowerBook — does the problem remain? If so, it's system level (which is what I would suspect), otherwise it's something limited to your original user account, and a System reinstall has much less of a chance of fixing it.

If it's System-level, you may get some use from SharePoints (see "Hotlinks"), an excellent file sharing utility (or System Preferences pane if you want to run it that way) which may tell you what's happening with the shares. It may also allow you to establish a new share of the whole hard disk. My System Preferences crashed when I tried, but that might be because Leopard has similar functionality built in for "arbitrary" shares.

You could just use SharePoints to establish shares to just the subfolders you want if sharing the whole HD doesn't work. You may even be able to see the postfix folder that's being shared and turn off its sharing. — *Sean McNamara*



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Microsoft Reader tip



Decipher the symbols

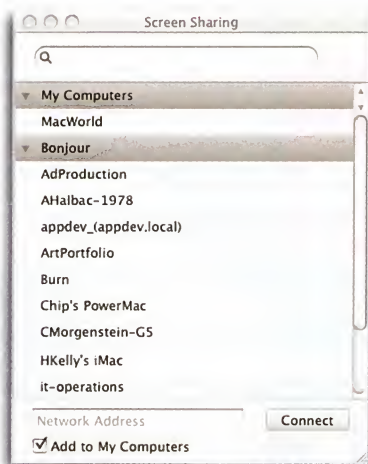
You want to know what the keyboard shortcut symbols you see in the menus and a lot of Mac documentation mean? Open Mac Help (in the Finder, under the Help menu) and type in "symbols for special keys". This will give you the graphical representation of the keys used in keyboard shortcuts.

"kim jong il"
via Forums

Each month, Microsoft gives a Bluetooth Notebook Mouse 5000

valued at \$^^ to the Australian Macworld reader who submits (via e-mail or the web site) the best and most useful undocumented tip. Enjoy wireless freedom with the Bluetooth Notebook Mouse 5000 — no transceiver to connect or lose! Keep USB ports free for other devices, and take it with you in a convenient carrying case. Microsoft's high-definition laser technology means the mouse is more responsive, more precise and tracks more smoothly than standard laser mice. It also features a battery

indicator light and an on/off switch to conserve power when it's not in use. The ergonomically-designed Bluetooth Notebook Mouse 5000 features four fully-configurable buttons and a scroll wheel. E-mail your tip with the subject header "Help reader tip", including your full name, address and phone number, to matthew.powell@niche.com.au or use the "Submit a tip" button on the Help section of www.macworld.com.au. All reader tips become the sole property of Niche Media.



Bonjour browser. Using the hidden Screen Sharing utility and a Terminal command, you can get a list of Bonjour-accessible computers whose screens you can share.

Share screens faster

You probably know that you can share screens with another Mac from iChat and the Finder. But a more powerful tool for this purpose, cleverly named Screen Sharing, is hidden in /System/Library/CoreServices. When you launch it, you'll see a dialog box asking for the network address of the remote machine. If you don't know the IP address, quit Screen Sharing, switch to Terminal, and type (all on one line): `defaults write com.apple.ScreenSharing ShowBonjourBrowser_Debug 1`

Now launch Screen Sharing again and revel in the new Bonjour Browser window, where you can pick the machine to which you'd like to connect. You'll still have to supply a user name and password, but at least you don't have to enter the full network address. If you want to make future access a bit easier, select Add To My Computers to add that machine to the Bonjour Browser window.

— Christopher Alois

Hotlinks

gimp-print.sourceforge.net/
Get Gutenprint

Epson non-printer

After a recent OS update my Epson MFC CX5900 will do everything but print from the computer. Three contacts with Epson have not helped. The version is 3.3e. The .dmg files seem to install but no driver appears in the list.

"Adie"

Via Forums

View plists in Quick Look

At some point in OS X's evolution, Apple began saving plists in a binary format instead of in XML. That was a pain if you just wanted to look quickly at preference settings. You either had to convert the file to XML using `plutil` or open the file in Property List Editor, which is a poor browser. But in Leopard, Quick Look displays binary plists as XML. You can select a bunch of plists, launch Quick Look, and view all of them using Quick Look's simple navigation tools. — Jeffery Parks

Gutenprint (formerly Gimp-print) is now available (see "Hotlinks"). It's a very useful set of extensions and printer drivers for, amongst others, CUPS, the underlying printing system Apple implemented in Mac OS X (and which it has since acquired).

— Sean McNamara

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Hotlinks

www.bluetooth.com/

The official Bluetooth page

www.salling.com/Clicker/mac/

Salling Clicker

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harald_I_of_Denmark

The original Bluetooth

New to the Mac? Start here

Bluetooth basics

There's one technology included in all new Macs (and many not-so-new ones) which is overlooked by many Mac users — Bluetooth.

Although Bluetooth is technically a networking protocol, I find it easier to think of it as being like "wireless USB" — a short-range, low(ish) bandwidth connection method perfectly suited for connecting your computer to small portable devices such as mice, keyboards, PDAs, phones and printers (amongst many others).

Data rates vary, depending on the version of the specification of the transceiver built into devices, with most consumer devices these days having the v2.x version (which operates at 3 megabits per second). The wireless range depends on the power output of the transceiver, with most general devices having a range of approximately 10 metres.

Macs can use Bluetooth for many different uses — I use Bluetooth to synchronise my phone, computer and PDA wirelessly (not needing to plug in makes me much more likely to do the synchronisation), as well as to remote control my computer from my phone or PDA (using a great piece of shareware called Salling Clicker).

The most useful thing I do with Bluetooth, however, is to make my phone into a wireless 3G modem for internet access while I'm out and about -- my computer doesn't

even have to be physically close to my phone (as long as it's in the same room) and I don't need a separate USB 3G modem to plug in.

Making it work. Bluetooth has two concepts that are integral to inter-device communication: discoverability and pairing. If a device is discoverable, it means other devices within range can see it and communicate with it. Having a device always discoverable is a potential security risk, as any other Bluetooth device within range can see the device as being available for connections, and compromised devices may try to send on their malicious payload to such devices (files can be sent to a discoverable device from another device with which it hasn't paired). Given the ultra-portability of most Bluetooth devices like phones and PDAs, it's generally a good idea to turn off discoverability when not pairing to new devices.

Each device has its own procedure to turning discoverability on and off. If my phone is set to discoverable, I reject any incoming file I didn't explicitly send to my phone myself, including promotional pictures sent via Bluetooth, which seems to be a popular marketing tool in shopping centres these days.

Pairing is an established trusted relationship between two devices. To establish a pairing relationship, at least one of the devices needs to be discoverable when pairing so the

other can see it to establish the connection. Often when pairing, one or both of the devices will ask you to enter a passkey. Sometimes the passkey is generated by the initiating device, sometimes the initiating device will ask you to create one -- either way, both devices need to know the passkey, and you'll often be prompted to enter the passkey on the second device.

Mac OS X's Bluetooth pairing procedure generates the passkey for you, displays it in big type, and asks you to enter it on the other device. Some devices, such as mice, don't have anything to enter the passkey on, so will generally have an empty passkey which is automatically detected and entered for you.

Once pairing relationships are established, Bluetooth is a very convenient way to use your external devices — it's certainly freed me up in many ways both when travelling (fewer cables to pack, more convenient internet connection) and at the home office (fewer cables on my desk, and when I'm on the lounge I can connect to devices on my desk without tripable cables).

If you have a Bluetooth-capable Mac (or buy a Bluetooth dongle) and a Bluetooth device or two, I encourage you to explore what uses you might be able to put it to. — Sean McNamara



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iPod The Missing Manual is now in its sixth edition, bringing the iPod Touch and the video-capable Nano into the fold alongside the newly-badged Classic and the ever-diminishing Shuffle. The opening gambit "out of the box and into your ears in 15 minutes" does just that for each of the four models and then it's learning to navigate the menus in a general way. The radical new interface on the Touch gets its own treatment before an exploration of iTunes, mothership to all iPods.

Primed with the basics you're ready to change audio file formats, strip out duplicates, match lyrics to song files and add artwork. Then create playlists to suit your personality or mood and learn all the things you can do in the iTunes Store.

Video and photos come next with special attention to the unique resizing techniques for the Touch and its ability to pull in YouTube videos. More? OK, then learn how to use your iPod as an address book, calendar, stopwatch, clock and portable hard drive. Or plug it into your car or home stereo. Or you can touch the web with inbuilt Safari and a Wi-Fi connection.

From its beginnings as a simple, stylish music player the iPod has evolved into a feature-laden "shirt pocket cinema". Brilliantly illustrated in full colour and with each feature covered in a one- or two-page setting this Manual is a clear roadmap through

the maze of features and would be a great title to share around a circle of iPodders.



Author **David Pogue**
Publisher **O'Reilly**
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iMovie '08 & iDVD The Missing Manual

manages to follow the highly successful format which covered previous incarnations of these two iLife stalwarts while still accommodating Apple's fundamental change of direction in iMovie '08. So, before you even open the software you'll learn all about camcorders, professional filming, lighting and audio techniques and the particular requirements of special events such as weddings, sport and music video.

Now transfer your brilliant footage into iMovie and get down to work with '08's totally new clip handling and transition techniques. Make easy colour corrections with the new iPhoto-style adjustments panel. Crop and rotate your clips. Enjoy the new titling and still image features but despair at the retrograde changes to audio editing. But salvation is at hand with tips for shuffling clips between '06 (which comes as a free download) and '08 to get the best of both.

Finally learn the tech specs of exporting to a growing list of options, which now includes iPod, iPhone, Apple TV, Front Row and YouTube as well as QuickTime and the web.

Although iDVD '08 has some nice interface and performance improvements it is still essentially the same as its predecessor. So learn the basics to get your iMovies quickly onto disc, then fancy them up with creative menus and slideshows. Customise

your own themes and use the map function for quick control of the elements of your DVD.

Appendices cover iMovie menu by menu, basic troubleshooting, keyboard shortcuts and a verrrry handy visual cheat sheet which identifies the major visual cues on the new iMovie '08 interface.

If you're into quick video editing '08 could be for you and this Manual should not be missing from your bookshelf.



Author **David Pogue**
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Mac OS X Leopard Edition — The Missing Manual

can be reasonably said to "dwarf the Tokyo White Pages". As the Mac OS acquires more features such manuals are bound to increase in size. Nevertheless there is a stack of downloadable PDF appendixes referenced throughout the book which take you even further (see "Hotlinks").

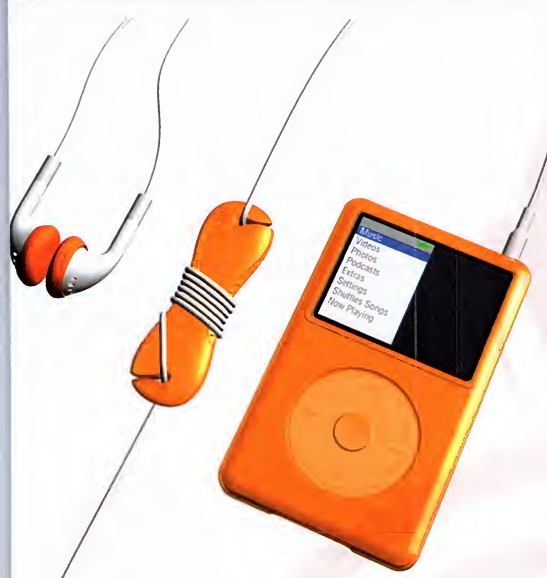
The Manual is written for readers at all levels of technical sophistication. The main content is aimed at advanced beginners or intermediate users but short sidebar articles called Up to Speed are specifically designed to get first-timers on board. At the other end of the scale Power Users' Clinic sidebars offer tips, tricks and shortcuts to experienced users.

This is not simply a rewrite of the Tiger edition with the new Leopard features tacked on. All standard Mac features are treated in greater depth.

If you need to see all the spots on the Leopard, the level of detail and the easygoing *Missing Manual* style will give you the vision. ☞

Hotlinks

missingmanuals.com/cds/macxleopardmm/
extra appendixes for the Leopard Missing Manual



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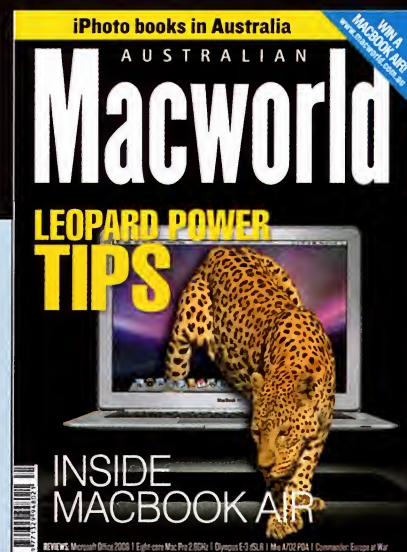
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Microsoft Office 2008



Microsoft Word

Adds new layout mode but loses Visual Basic

IT has been 24 years since Microsoft first released Word, and four years since the program's last major upgrade. How much more can Microsoft do to tweak its venerable word processor? Surprisingly, Word gets several major enhancements in Office 2008, the first version of Microsoft's productivity suite to run natively on both PowerPC- and Intel-based Macs. Those changes include a new document format, a simplified toolbar, and a new toolbox that combines palettes for managing

Preference pane. Word's new preferences pane is more Mac-like and better organises Word's many preference options, making it much easier to customize the program

formatting, clip art, iPhoto images, research, and bibliographies. But the biggest improvement is the addition of a new view option called Publishing Layout.

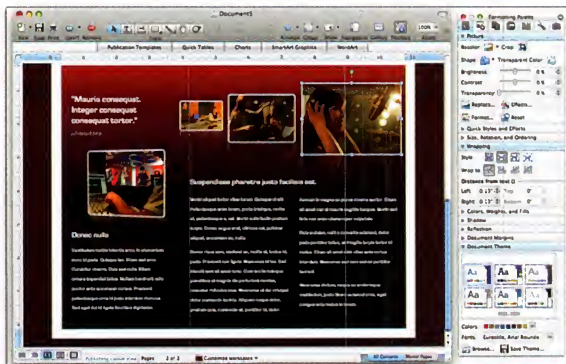
In this new view, arranging text and graphics on the page is far simpler than it was in previous versions of Word. Like Apple, Microsoft has apparently concluded that people use word processing programs for far more than just creating text-based documents. Creating complex, graphics-rich documents requires tools historically found in powerful page layout programs such as Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress. Like Apple's Pages, Microsoft Word now allows you to select a distinct editing environment specifically for creating layout-intensive documents. That environment is Publishing Layout.

The biggest downside in what would otherwise be an excellent upgrade: the elimination of Visual Basic for Applications (VBA). In its place, Word 2008 offers limited support for AppleScript and Automator. Those replacements don't offer the recording or other features that made it simple to automate and customise Word 2004.

Publishing tools. It's always been a bit frustrating using Word to create brochures, postcards, posters, or other types of documents that require arranging different elements on the page. Previous versions simply haven't been designed to perform that kind of page layout magic. Word 2008's new Publishing Layout view changes that dramatically.

Publishing Layout offers a bunch of tools for placing and manipulating text and graphics on the page. Like Pages, Word 2008 allows you to create template documents with image and text placeholders; you can drag

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 Outstanding ★★★★★
 Very good ★★★★
 Good ★★★
 Flawed ★★
 Unacceptable ★
 Dangerous ☹

Type	Word processor
Rating	★★★★½
Pros	Streamlined new interface; new Publishing Layout view; improved citation and bibliographic tools; refined preferences tools; Elements Gallery makes adding graphics, charts, and other elements easy
Cons	No Visual Basic support; limited support for AppleScript and Automator; Formatting Palette may outgrow even large screens; scroll wheels don't work in Formatting Palette
OS X	10.4, 10.5
Processor	Universal
SRP	\$649 as part of Microsoft Office 2008; \$249 as part of Home and Student Edition
Publisher	Microsoft 132058
Reviewer	Jeffery Battersby
Hot links	www.microsoft.com/mac
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10.4, 10.5
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and drop images and text into those placeholders, making it easy to turn those templates into new, fresh documents. You can also link text boxes so text overflows from one to another.

The image-editing tools in Publishing Layout aren't as good as those in Pages. While it is possible to add masks and transparency and make minor adjustments to images in your document, the program is nowhere near as adept at it as Pages. Another thing I noticed: the longer I worked in Publishing Layout mode, the slower Word seemed to get when manipulating images or moving text boxes around on the page.

Bye-bye, VBA. Word 2008 adopts the new, XML-based .docx format for documents. That format makes Word 2008 compatible with the latest version of Word for Windows. Unfortunately, those documents can't be opened in older versions of Word without the down-

Elements Gallery. You can't get rid of the toolbar that now appears at the top of every document, but it does give you quick access to all kinds of graphics and other document options



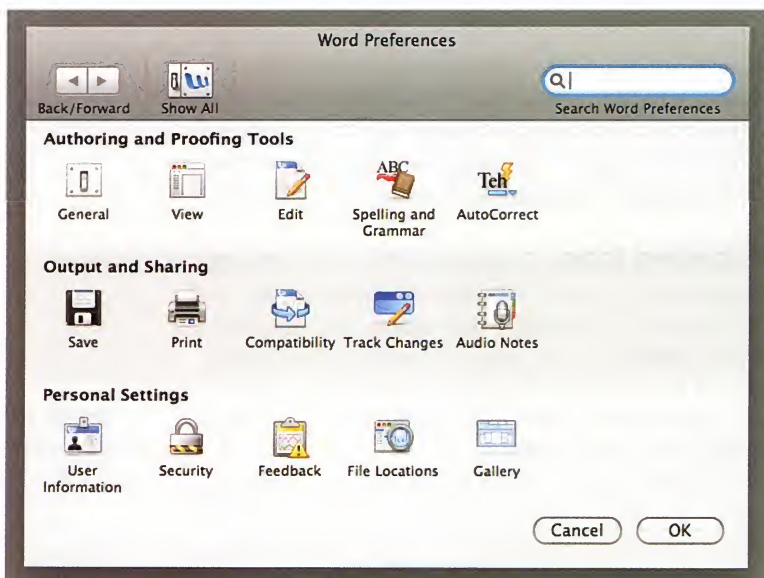
Publishing layout. Word's new Publishing Layout view gives you greater control over how text and images appear in your documents

loadable .docx converter from Microsoft. To bypass this problem, Word 2008 does allow you to save documents in the older .doc format using a Compatibility Mode.

More significantly, Office 2008 marks the demise of Visual Basic for Applications. In its stead, Word includes an AppleScript library. Unfortunately, according to Microsoft, Word's AppleScript library isn't nearly as complete as the VBA library was. In addition, while there are 30 Automator actions for Word, they aren't that useful. Neither AppleScript nor Automator will let you record a string of events in Word and save them as a reusable script.

Word does a good job of merging data from a variety of sources, including text files, Office's own address book, and FileMaker Pro. But, unlike Pages, Word can't merge data from Apple's Address Book app. I'd prefer a program that can merge data from any source. But, given the choice, I'd take Word's missing Address Book merge to Pages' missing everything else.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. As a word processor, little has changed in Word 2008. The elimination of VBA and weak support for AppleScript and Automator make the program far less versatile and valuable for users who really need automation. But the program's streamlined interface and the addition of the new Publishing Layout view make it a compelling choice, especially if you want to stretch Word beyond its current capabilities.



MICROSOFT EXCEL 2008

Spreadsheet application

Runs natively on Intel- and PowerPC-based Macs; Elements Gallery can save development time; Formula Builder eases formula creation; improved handling of graphics and images

No Visual Basic for Applications support; buggy Automator/AppleScript support for OS X 10.5; no support for OS X Services; wasted vertical space in spreadsheets; lingering bugs from previous version; no must-have new features

10.4, 10.5

Universal

\$649 as part of Office 2008; \$229 as part of Home and Student Edition

Microsoft 132058

Rob Griffiths

www.microsoft.com/mac

www.macworld.com.au/reviews/view/microsoft-excel-2008-246

MICROSOFT ENTOURAGE 2008

E-mail, calendar and information-management application

Excellent mail and calendar features; faster e-mail searching; improved Exchange support; better database integrity

Light on new features; could do a better job of synchronisation; minor bugs; My Day application is of limited use; Automator workflows don't work under Leopard

10.4, 10.5

Universal

\$649 as part of Microsoft Office 2008; \$229 as part of Home and Student Edition (which does not include Exchange support)

Microsoft 132058

Tom Negrino

www.microsoft.com/mac

www.macworld.com.au/reviews/view/microsoft-entourage-2008-243



Microsoft PowerPoint

Edges closer to the competition

FEW products enjoy the market dominance that PowerPoint for Windows does — for most of the world, the words “PowerPoint” and “presentation” are interchangeable. But Mac presenters have had an alternative since January of 2003, when Apple unveiled Keynote. Although the initial release lagged in a few critical respects, three subsequent updates addressed most of Keynote’s shortcomings and established it as



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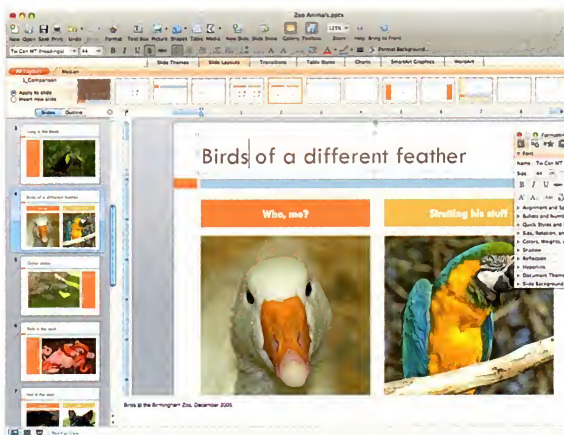
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the clear presentation leader for the Mac. Sporting an improved interface and beefed-up graphics capabilities, PowerPoint 2008 catches up to Keynote in a few areas and even exceeds it in some.

PowerPoint's new look. Many changes to PowerPoint's user interface are recognisable instantly. The standard toolbar is now built in, and you can opt to display all the toolbars docked or undocked – except the Drawing toolbar, which cannot be docked. When docked, the toolbars are integrated into the main window, resulting in a much cleaner appearance than in PowerPoint 2004. You can also customise any of the toolbars to suit your workflow by dragging commands into or out of them.

In PowerPoint 2008, the dedicated Slide and Outline views are gone, replaced by a three-part Normal View that shows the current slide on a light grey backdrop and speaker's notes on the bottom.

A better Toolbox. PowerPoint 2008's clip art library includes the cheesy drawings that are a staple of bad presentations everywhere, but thankfully adds more than 100 photographs with transparent backgrounds. Animation controls get their own Toolbox palette, as do Reference Tools, which let you look up dictionary definitions, thesaurus entries, translations, and more. The remaining palettes let you access PowerPoint's Scrapbook and Compatibility Report, which were housed separately in PowerPoint 2004's Toolbox.

Microsoft's attempt to pack so many different commands into a relatively compact window results in an ever-changing interface, and the dynamic resizing that occurs as you switch between tabs is sometimes jarring. In addition, many Toolbox buttons – picture formatting and animation effects, for example – open separate dialog boxes with their own varied interfaces and quirks. In comparison, Keynote's Inspector windows encompass a narrower range of functions but have a more consistent

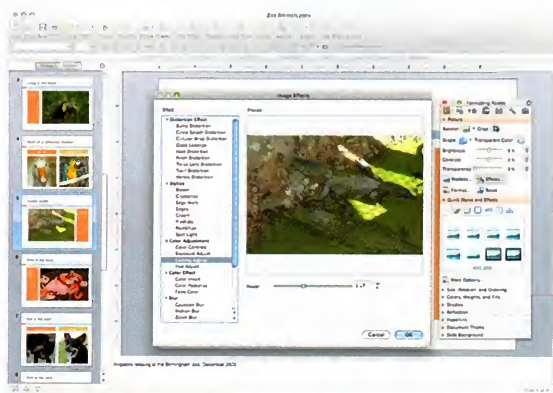
user interface, so they're easier to deal with. And, in contrast with the Toolbox, you can open multiple instances of Keynote's Inspector to work with different object attributes at the same time.

Missed opportunities and glitches. Some PowerPoint 2008 omissions are especially odd: for example, you can interact with QuickTime VR movies in a slideshow (something that Keynote still doesn't let you do), but you can't pause and then scrub back and forth through a movie during a presentation the way you can with Keynote. Unfortunately, that limits PowerPoint's suitability for some educational applications.

PowerPoint's continued reliance on external applications (Microsoft Graph in PowerPoint 2004 and Excel in PowerPoint 2008) to create charts and graphs is also a bit of a letdown. While PowerPoint and Excel together provide a more comprehensive library of styles and options than Keynote's integrated chart editor does, editing the source data in a separate program still feels awkward.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. Despite many improvements, PowerPoint 2008 doesn't feel as well thought out as Keynote – a legacy of its long heritage and its close ties to other Office applications. While you can duplicate almost all of Keynote's dazzling effects in PowerPoint, it's still faster to whip up a top-notch slideshow in Keynote. But that doesn't mean that Keynote is always the best choice, especially if you can't use a Mac to deliver your presentations. In many corporate, educational, and scientific venues, presenters have no choice but to use PowerPoint. (You can create a slideshow in Keynote and export it in PowerPoint format, but many of Keynote's best effects are lost in translation.) When you factor in the common requirement to exchange presentations with PowerPoint for Windows users, it often makes more sense to just use PowerPoint.

Image editing. PowerPoint's Picture Effects can't replace Photoshop, but they're adequate for quick-and-dirty image adjustments.





Microsoft Excel

Gains some minor additions, but no VBA support is a step backward

IT'S been more than three years since the last update to Excel, the leading Mac spreadsheet. Despite the long wait for a new version, when you launch Excel 2008, you'll see what appears to be a slightly re-skinned version of Excel 2004 – or even of Excel v.X. Appearances can be deceiving, however – Excel 2008 is a major rewrite, designed to run natively on Intel-powered Macs as well as PowerPC-based machines. This release of Excel also offers some new features, though it drops at least one major area of functionality. As a result, Excel 2008 may leave you feeling somewhat underwhelmed.

New features. Most users will first notice the Elements Gallery, which is represented by a row of four buttons – Sheets, Charts, SmartArt Graphics, and WordArt – and appears below the toolbar. Each button is a shortcut to commonly-used features. Click Sheets and choose from one of a number of preformatted sheets in seven categories; Excel will open that sheet as a starting point – though experienced users may find these sheets too simple for their needs. The Charts tool lets you quickly insert a nicely formatted chart. SmartArt Graphics offers a large number of graphic elements, and WordArt lets you customise the appearance of text blocks.



Gallery browsing. The new Elements Gallery gives you access to a number of ready-to-use templates. Here's one that's had three custom images applied, and the stock text replaced.

Whether or not you find the Gallery useful will depend on how you use Excel. Personally, I have no use for the Sheets or WordArt buttons, but both Charts and SmartArt Graphics make it simple to add professional-looking images to your spreadsheets.

Another new feature – the Formula Builder – makes building formulas simpler. After you enter a formula name, the Formula Builder displays input boxes and brief descriptions for each element in that formula. As you enter values, the boxes become colour-coded to match the relevant cells on the worksheet that are used in the formula – so it's easy to see exactly what goes where. This feature can be a big timesaver, especially for those formulas that you don't use often enough to memorise their syntax.

Regarding Macros and AppleScript. Excel 2008 doesn't support Visual Basic for Applications (VBA), which is the language used to create and record macros in prior versions of Excel. This is the major failing in Excel 2008, and the primary reason many users – myself included – won't be upgrading. Anyone with a collec-

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tion of macro-enabled spreadsheets will be forced to replace those macros with AppleScript (where possible), or learn to do without. Users in companies with Windows machines will be affected as well, as Office 2007 still includes VBA, so they may receive worksheets that don't function as they do on Windows machines.

As a replacement, Microsoft suggests using AppleScript and Automator — and Excel 2008 does include a large AppleScript dictionary. However, this version lacks any ability to record AppleScripts.

Missing features and other foibles. Excel 2004 lacked support for Services, a standard OS X feature that lets you select snippets of text and send them to other applications. Despite three-plus years of development, Excel 2008 still doesn't support Services, so more work is required to use text from Excel in other programs.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. Excel 2008 is basically a very nice Intel-native port of Excel 2004, with a few features added on and support for Macros removed. If you absolutely require Intel-native code on your Mac, or you find Excel 2004 runs too slowly on your Intel-powered Mac, then obviously you should upgrade. Additionally, if you receive files in the new .xlsx format, you'll have to upgrade as well — there are no file format converters for Excel 2004, as there are for Word and PowerPoint. If you're happy with the features and performance of Excel 2004, though, there's no need to jump up to Excel 2008 right away. And if you rely on macros, you really can't upgrade unless you're also an AppleScript wizard and willing to recode all of your macros. 



Microsoft Entourage

*Superior depth of features
bests Apple competitor*

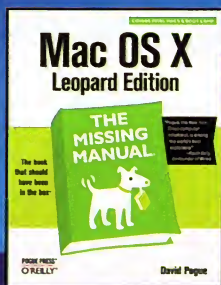
IN the four years since the last major version of Microsoft Office, Entourage has probably come under more attack from Apple's applications than any other member of the Office suite. OS X's Mail, Address Book, and iCal have all come to offer credible alternatives to Entourage's core features. So how does Entourage 2008 stand up to Apple's triumvirate?

Welcome facelift. Entourage finally looks like a native Mac application. Entourage 2008 was rewritten as a Universal Binary, running equally well on Macs based on Intel and PowerPC chips. (For me, the Universal conversion also solved Entourage 2004's annoying tendency to bog down on Intel Macs.) Part of that transition included a revised user interface, which makes the program easier to use. Gone is the odd, non-standard toolbar; in its place is a familiar-looking Apple-style toolbar.

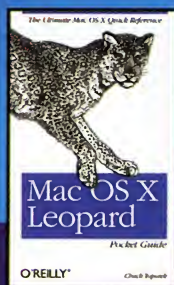
Mail call. Entourage is first and foremost a heavy-duty e-mail program, and its e-mail features have been refined, but for the most part not overhauled. You'll still find excellent tools that help you organize your e-mail flood, such as the Mailing List Manager and fine-grained Rules that, in my opinion, ace Mail's similar feature.

The junk mail filter, which in Entourage 2004 became hopelessly out of date and useless, has been updated; when it was set to the High option, I found that it actu-

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ally worked well, catching almost all junk mail. Microsoft has promised more frequent filter updates to keep up with the spamming arms race. Time will tell if, as in the past, Entourage 2008 falls behind and users need to again resort to extra spam-fighting help like C-Command's excellent SpamSieve. One minor but welcome change: when you select and delete mail from the Junk e-mail folder, Entourage deletes it forever, rather than just moving it to the Deleted Items folder as in the 2004 version, where you would have to delete it again. A new anti-phishing feature automatically blocks a long list of potentially malevolent file attachments, such as scripts and executable programs, and alerts you to suspicious links in e-mail that may lead to a fraudulent web site.

There are several other new or improved features relating to e-mail or calendaring, but they apply only to users in corporate environments that connect to a Microsoft Exchange server. Given that it's been four long years in the making, it's a missed opportunity that Entourage 2008 hasn't also added some of the best new features found in Mail, such as automatic detection of physical addresses and dates, or e-mail stationery templates. While I find Mail's templates cartoonish, the concept of stationery is valuable. Presumably Microsoft's business-oriented user base would inspire a more tasteful implementation of them.

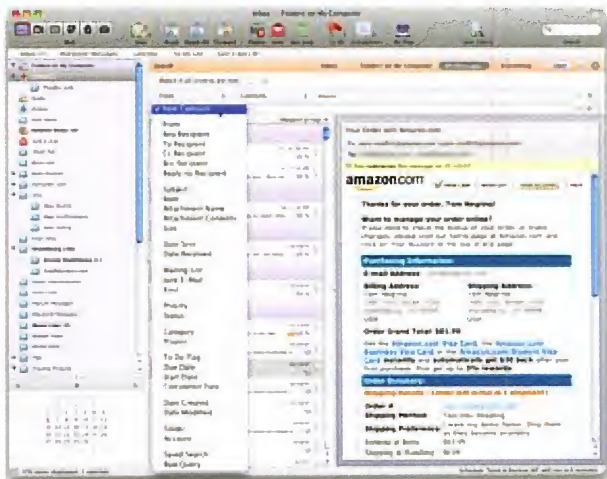
Better database. A fairly common complaint from long-time Entourage users is that the program's database was fragile and prone to corruption, requiring all-too-regular use of the included Database Utility to repair and rebuild it. Microsoft says it has done extensive work to make the database more reliable, reducing the need to rebuild. Over the course of two months, working with both the beta and the final shipping version, I experienced no database problems. As a test, I rebuilt the database anyway, and noticed an improvement over a similar rebuild in Entourage 2004: the rebuild no longer loses synchronised data such as e-mail in remote IMAP, Exchange, or Hotmail folders, or the links between items inside Entourage.

Entourage uses a single database file to store its information, and that file can become quite large over time. When Apple released Spotlight, Microsoft created a workaround so Spotlight could index and search Entourage's e-mail messages: it replicates each message as a small text file in your User Library folder. But there's no such workaround for Leopard's Time Machine backup facility. If you receive even a single e-mail, the whole database is marked as new, and Time Machine will back the entire thing up every hour.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. The programs that come with Mac OS X, especially in their Leopard incarnations, can easily satisfy people with lighter e-mail, contact, and scheduling needs. For Microsoft's corporate customers, Entourage 2008 is an improved Exchange citizen over previous versions, which will help Macs better fit into Windows-centric organisations. Finally, if you're outside of the corporate realm, and

need a mail, calendar, and contact manager with lots of headroom and solid integration with the rest of the Office suite, Entourage provides a wealth of features that are deeper than Apple's trio. 

Find it fast. Entourage's new reliance on Spotlight for searching speeds up searches dramatically, but the program still retains its wide array of search criteria.



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Mac Pro eight-core 2.8GHz

Potent power

APPLE'S Mac Pro has been beefed up not only with faster, more-efficient processors, but also with a broad range of under-the-bonnet improvements designed to provide the eight cores in those processors with plenty of data to chew on.

Successful computer design is all about balance. Memory must be able to keep up with processors, storage must rapidly fulfil data requests, and expansion slots must swiftly supply displays and drives with pixels and bits. The eight-core 2.8GHz Mac Pro sports enhancements in all of these areas.

The two Intel Xeon Harpertown processors that lie at the heart of the Mac Pro are voracious beasts. With each processor carrying four processing cores, their architecture is essentially the same as that of the previous Mac Pro's Cloverton processors (we have to wait until later this year for the next entirely new Intel architecture, code-named Nehalem, to appear). Meanwhile, they benefit from a few key improvements.

For example, in addition to their improved 45-nanometer efficiency, their on-chip caches have been boosted to 12MB per each quad-core processor, allowing for near-instantaneous access to a larger amount of frequently used data and instructions. They also benefit from a new set of instructions called SSE4, which can improve everything from video encoding to gaming to database searching.


The processors also talk to the rest of the Mac Pro more quickly, over a 1600MHz frontside bus that communi-

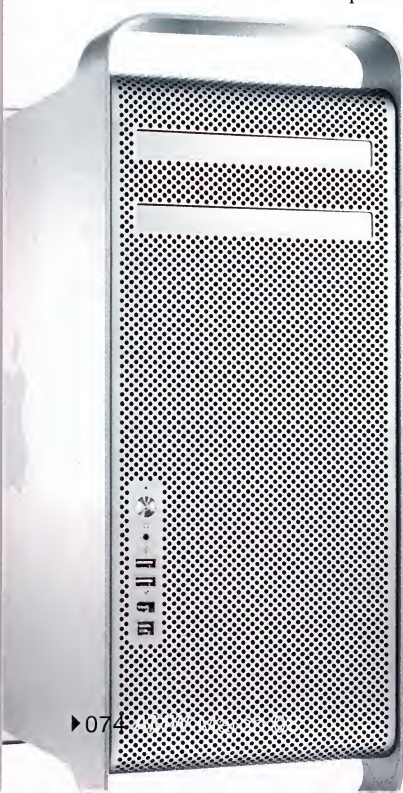
cates with faster 800MHz memory through a faster Intel Seaburg system controller. According to Apple, that makes memory throughput over one and a half times as fast as the earlier Mac Pro line.

Improved slots. The new Mac Pro's faster system controller connects to the unit's new – and faster – PCI Express 2.0 expansion slots. Not only do they provide double the throughput of the original PCI Express, they also offer better control over the devices you'll pop into those slots. The Mac Pro has a total of four PCI Express slots: The top two are plain vanilla PCI Express, the bottom two are the more-robust PCI Express 2.0. Unlike the earlier Mac Pros, in which you could have only one 16-lane card and had to use the Expansion Slot Utility to choose that lucky slot, this new configuration provides full 16-lane support in both bottom slots; both upper slots support four-lane cards.

Into the bottommost slot – which is double-wide, should you choose to fill it with an exceptionally chubby video card – goes your choice of an ATI Radeon HD 2600 XT 256MB (base model), NVIDIA GeForce 8800 GT 512MB, or NVIDIA Quadro FX 5600 1.5GB. Each of these cards has two dual-link DVI ports to support two 30-inch Apple Cinema Displays. The Radeon and GeForce cards also use what's called a unified shader model, which allows developers to more easily make their games and 3D applications perform better.

Storage opportunities. The 2.8GHz model that we tested didn't have the Mac Pro's new – but optional – storage improvements. As in previous Mac Pros, the new model has four easy-to-access storage bays into which you can insert up to four 7200rpm SATA drives of up to 1TB each. What's new is that you can now replace those drives with up to four exceptionally speedy 15,000 rpm SAS (serial-attached SCSI) 300GB drives inserted into those same bays, then disconnect one simple cable from the logic board, reconnect it to an Apple Pro RAID Card you put into the top PCI Express slot, and, should you so choose, boot from the first SAS drive and configure the other three into a fast, safe, RAID 5 array. Other RAID configurations are possible, as well.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. If you simply want the fastest Mac you've ever used, the base-model Mac Pro Eight-Core 2.8GHz won't disappoint. If you're a content-creating professional who needs your video, audio, and or imaging workstation to fulfil its true potential, you may also opt to spend the extra cash to upgrade your new Mac Pro's processor speed, storage and RAM. If, however, you don't need the maximum Mac, stick to an iMac – they're plenty powerful for the rest of us. 



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The Live MOS sensor captures a 10.1 megapixel image; smaller than a 35mm film frame, the 12-60mm kit zoom lens equates to a useful 24-120 mm lens (in 35mm SLR-speak). The inbuilt image stabiliser promises to compensate for five lens stops. Dust is inhibited by a Supersonic Wave Filter installed in front of the image sensor, the removed dust trapped by a dust absorber. In startling fashion the camera is also splashproof – I poured a jug of water over it, to no harm! So you can be assured the built-in flash, LCD monitor and switches are resistant to sand, dust, rain and splashes.

Cues on the operating status of the camera are given by the rear screen's menu display and a smaller status LCD on top. Control of modes is accessed via an easily navigated series of wheels and buttons; it's one of the easiest to use systems I've encountered.

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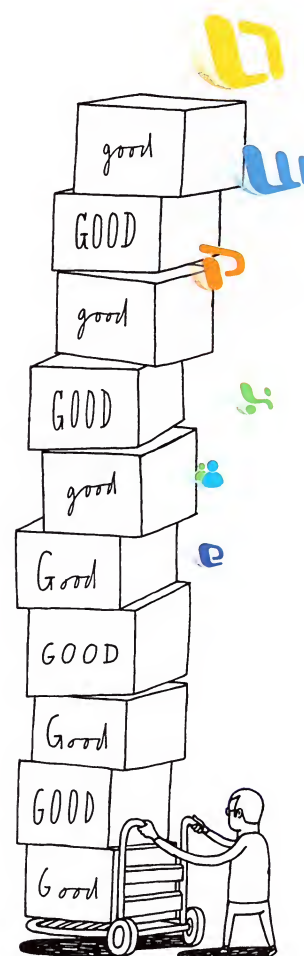
Australian Macworld's buying advice.

Most of the time I used the f2.8-4.0/12-60mm zoom and found the quality to be quite extraordinary: the auto metering coped with a crazily wide range of lighting; the AF eleven point AF worked flawlessly in 90 per cent of situations and the sharpness and colour fidelity was arguably the best I've encountered with an DSLR. 📷



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Type	Game
Rating	★★★★
Pros	Easy to learn; streamlined interface; various multiplayer options
Cons	Slows down as scenarios get large; no flashy graphics; limited "what if" scenarios
Ports	10.3, 10.4, 10.5
OS X	Universal
SRP	\$US50; download only
Publisher	Freeverse Software
Distributor	Available online
Reviewer	Reviewer Peter Cohen
Hot links	www.freeverse.com

Commander: Europe at War

*A welcome sight for
turn-based strategy game
buffs*

WAR games that take place on a hexagonally-divided map have a long and storied history pre-dating computer games by decades. Probably the most famous of these are titles like Panzerblitz and Air War.

I'm delighted to see this wonderful tradition continue with Slitherine Strategies' excellent Commander: Europe at War, now published for the Mac by Freeverse.

Commander: Europe at War takes you back to what's been the inspiration for so many strategy games over the years: the European theater during World War II. It's a "grand strategy" game, so you're putting your entire alliance's forces and economy into play to win. You can play either as the Axis (in this case, Germany and Italy, as play is restricted to Europe) or the Allies (the US, Great Britain, and Russia).

With each turn, you mobilise your forces, moving them against the enemy, and make decisions about production — where you'll build new forces and how you'll deploy them once they're built.

Honeycomb battalions. Commander: Europe at War breathes new life into the hallowed genre of hex-based strategy gaming.



One rather odd design conceit of Commander: Europe at War is that you're playing as an entire side in the conflict — Axis or Allies — but you're managing each of the superpowers that comprises that side separately. If you're playing as the Allies, for example, you'll need to keep an eye on separate production and unit control of Russian forces, US forces, and British forces, rather than a single unified "side." As the conflict grows — and this is a world war, after all — keeping track of all of those units can be a little overwhelming. Slitherine's done a good job of keeping the interface simplified enough that you should be able to whip through turns fairly fast.


Research plays a role, too. You can invest your nation's wealth into improving the efficiency and the strength of your war units, whether you're building subs or doing dogfights in the skies, improving armour ratings or developing anti-tank guns. Again, the game's developers have kept the muss and fuss to a minimum here. Of course, that's a double-edged sword. Some grognards (that's fancy-talk for "war game enthusiasts") may prefer a deeper gameplay experience, but I found it quite refreshing and really appealing.

A tutorial mode helps walk you through the interface and does a marvelous job of explaining how the game works. It's worthwhile to run through it, and entirely possible to run the game without reading any documentation as a result.

The game's graphics and sound are good, but not spectacular. There's no real animation to speak of here — you're watching static icons for each unit move over the hexagonal grid surface, and you may see some flashes indicating that different units are fighting each other, accompanied by sound effects (bombs dropping, artillery and weapons firing, and the roar of tank and airplane engines), but you're not going to see any detailed 3D graphics here.

When you start a game, you can adjust a few options, such as whether you'll play as the Axis or Allies, whether either side has an advantage, and when you want to start playing (any period from 1939 to 1945). There are a few events "set in stone," by the way — the United States doesn't get involved in the conflict until 1941, as an example. So Commander: Europe at War may not be the best for grognards looking for "What If" scenarios.

The game also supports multiplayer play, either by hot-seat, direct TCP/IP connection to another machine, or Play By E-Mail (PBEM). A demo is available, so make sure to check it out before you plunk down your cash.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. Commander: Europe at War isn't the flashiest strategy game ever, but it's a welcome respite for gamers who miss turn-based strategy games like the old Avalon Hill variety. 

MIO DIGIWALKER A702	
Type	smartphone
Rating	***
Pros	Clever design; GPS
Cons	No 3G; usability is a problem
SRP	\$899
Manufacturer	Mio
Distributor	Mio 1300 646 477
Reviewer	Anthony Caruana
Hot links	www.mio-tech.com.au

Mio DigiWalker A702

Swiss Army knife of GPS

WITH a 3.2MP camera, GPS receiver with maps for all of Australia and a suite of office apps with Microsoft's Mobile Office the Mio A702 is something of a jack-of-all-trades. It runs Windows Mobile 6 Professional and Mio boosts that with MioMap 3.0, Sensis WhereIs R14 mapping, a voice dialer, a calculator that does unit conversions including currency and a world clock.


The phone keypad is comfortable to use but the tumbler on the left edge of the device for scrolling through lists is hard to use for a right-handed person (ie most of the population). Many on-screen controls are too small to be used on the 2.7" 240x320 touchscreen without pulling out the stylus.

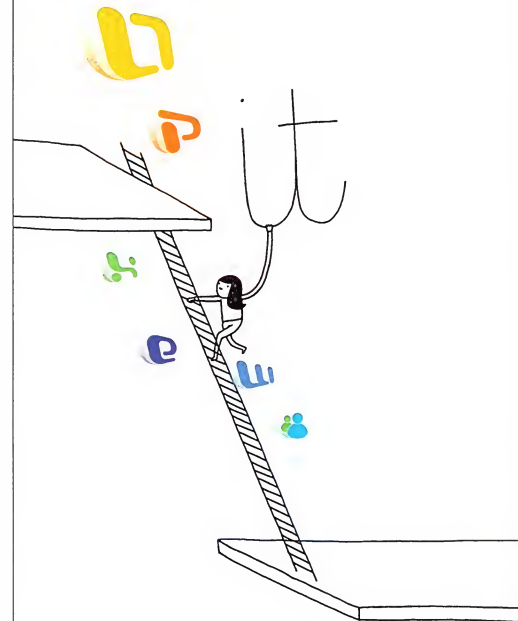
The Bluetooth 2.0 and 802.11g WiFi work well and are easy to configure and use. I connected the A702 to several WiFi networks using different encryption systems without any problem. There's quad-band GSM, meaning it will operate in almost every country on the planet, but it lacks 3G capability.

The MioMap software and the 20-channel SiRFstarIII GPS chipset worked well although there were some occasions where the GPS was inaccurate by up to 25 metres in the canyons formed by tall buildings in Melbourne's CBD. Route calculation was swift. My main criticism of MioMap was that it's very difficult to enter a destination with your fingertip and extracting the stylus while the A702 is secured in the mount is a near impossibility.

Battery life was very good. From a full charge I was able to make several phone calls, browse the net using WiFi for an hour and make two 45 minute trips using the GPS and still had about 15 percent of the full charge remaining in 1300mAh battery. An AC charger and car charger are supplied in the box and you can connect the A702 to any computer with a regular USB cable and charge without the need of any software.

The provided sync software only supports Windows users unfortunately, so if you don't want to rely on Parallels or Boot Camp for your GPS needs, desktop connectivity to a Mac requires separate purchase of Missing Sync.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. The A702 packs plenty into a small package. However, the lack of 3G communications and some usability issues suggest that the price might be a little steep. 



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Just one more thing

AS I write this, it's exactly one week, two hours and ten minutes since Steve Jobs announced the MacBook Air. Which means two things. One, I'm a touch anally retentive, and two, this column is late, and the venerable MJCP isn't going to be too happy with me. Thankfully, I'm safely ensconced in a cold and inhospitable part of Canada as I write this, and what's more, there's an ex-Army paratrooper (and relative of mine) sitting across the table from me.

Now, I could write about my impressions of the MacBook Air. But you've undoubtedly read more than enough about Apple's super-thin ultraportable by now. I could write about my impressions of the Macworld conference itself — but if you're a smart type (and hey — don't sell yourself short there), you've already read them on the spiffy new Australian Macworld web site (see pretty much every page of the magazine if you don't yet know the URL).

OK, that was a lie; I am going to comment on the MacBook Air. Just to say briefly that, like a lot of Apple gear, it hits my tech lust button in all the right squishy places — but the common sense part of my head points out all the areas where it doesn't meet my specific needs.

Instead I'm going to talk about some of the truly ludicrous things that you can — but probably shouldn't — do with your Apple equipment. First, a quick history lesson. I'm well versed in the daft things that can be done with computers in an accidental setting. More than a decade ago, I did a long stint as a lowly phone tech support representative for a no longer



functional computer company that I won't name, so as not to implicate the guilty. Moo.

Anyway, I've heard it all, and dealt with it all, from women using CD trays as impromptu baby seats (it broke), to gentlemen enquiring about the best way to clean kangaroo droppings off a keyboard (I still don't know if there is a "best" — or, indeed, "any" — way), to the bloke who couldn't get a graphics card to fit "until I took an angle grinder to it" ...

But what amazes me in a modern setting is all the stuff you can do deliberately and with intent. For example, browsing through the Macworld Expo centre, I came across such lovely but ludicrous equipment as the iPod Toilet Roll holder. I'm (possibly unreliably) informed that this isn't a new development (although it certainly was to me), but that just makes it all the more startling that they couldn't reliably tell me if it was in fact, splash-proof. Given the setting it's designed to work in, I would have thought that this kind of thing would be the first consideration, not to mention the least pleasant testing, rather than an afterthought.

Or then there's the option for alternative casings. Now, I'll freely admit that one of the things that I generally

do like about Apple's machines is the design style. With only a few aberrations — for instance, I liked the older iMac design a lot better than the newer one — Apple tends to hit the sweet spot when it comes to making nice-looking computers, and it's more or less dragged the rest of the computer industry along. There's no end of ways to tart up your Mac, with varying results. As far as I'm concerned, by all means protect your investment with hard cases and good bags — but messing with the basic design seems like tinkering with something that's already pretty good.

There are more daft ways to abuse your beloved equipment, however. A little while back, I came across NetPong — a Mac clone of the beloved and classic Pong, but one that uses the tilt sensor (which protects the hard drive in case of sudden movement, such as a fall) to move the paddle. Do I really have to point out why that's a bad idea? Strangely enough, the same idea (or perhaps a conversion of the idea, or where NetPong sprang from) combines that with the inbuilt microphone to offer up Tilt Scream Pong. Same hard-drive-endangering tilt mechanism, with the added benefit of a larger paddle if you shriek loudly into it. The one advantage there is that if you are going to abuse a fine laptop by shaking it, and you do it in public while screaming, those nice men in the white lab coats will take you away rather swiftly.

Actually, strike that earlier comment about the MacBook Air. I'd love to get my hands on two of them — one with and one without the solid state drive. I propose a new type of benchmark, wherein we test how long each type of system can survive a rugged game of Tilt Scream Pong before the drive explodes. Anyone got a spare eight grand for testing equipment? ☹

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NetPong

futurefeeder.com/index.php/archives/2007/01/02/tilt-scream-pong/

Tilt Scream Pong

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